

“Timeless Classic Doctrine #4: Christian Freedom”

July 4<sup>th</sup>, 1776, is celebrated as the birthday of our country. It was on this date, 244 years ago, that 56 representatives from the 13 original states signed the “Declaration of Independence” from Great Britain. Listen to the conclusion of this timeless classic document. **“We, therefore, the Representatives of the united States of America, in General Congress, Assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the Name, and by Authority of the good People of these Colonies, solemnly publish and declare, That these united Colonies are, and of Right ought to be Free and Independent States; that they are Absolved from all Allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain, is and ought to be totally dissolved; and that as Free and Independent States, they have full Power to levy War, conclude Peace, contract Alliances, establish Commerce, and to do all other Acts and Things which Independent States may of right do. And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor.”** In summary they are saying, “With God as our witness we declare our nation to be a FREE nation and our citizens a free people.” In our sermon lesson for today the Apostle Paul reminds us that, “With God as our witness we declare that each person who trusts in Jesus as their Savior is a FREE person.” On this 4<sup>th</sup> of July weekend, let’s celebrate the timeless classic doctrine of “Christian Freedom.” Romans 6:1-11.

**<sup>1</sup> Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? <sup>2</sup> By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? <sup>3</sup> Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? <sup>4</sup> We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.**

**<sup>5</sup> If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. <sup>6</sup> For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin— <sup>7</sup> because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.**

**<sup>8</sup> Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. <sup>9</sup> For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. <sup>10</sup> The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. <sup>11</sup> In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.**

The Apostle Paul loved to pack a section of Scripture with many related, but yet different word pictures. We could focus on the blessings of baptism today. We could focus on the distinction between what Paul means by being dead and alive in Christ. I'll save those thoughts for another sermon. Today let's focus on the slave/freedom concept that Paul uses in this part of God's Word. What is Christian Freedom? **"For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin— because anyone who has died has been freed from sin"** (vs. 6-7). Each of us did the crimes against God and instead of nailing us to the cross of punishment he nailed his Son Jesus there in our place. The nails that held him to the cross were our sins, every last one of them, even our future sins – the ones we just promised to not do again. Every last crime Jesus did the time so that God will never come after you or me trying to carry out his just judgment. Each of us dug our own grave, but through the gift of faith in Jesus we aren't buried alone as we are buried with our Savior Jesus. Our sins are buried in Jesus tomb and they remain there completely removed from God's sight, never to be seen or mentioned by God again. And since that is true, that makes everyone who trusts in Jesus as their Savior **"freed from sin"** and its eternal consequence of Hell. And freed to spend eternity enjoying the freedoms of Heaven. But Paul also says we have been freed from sin in this way, **"that we should no longer be slaves to sin."** A "slave to sin" is someone who is powerless to say "no" to sin. A "slave to sin" is forced to sin because they are conceived and born a sinner. A slave to sin cannot please God. But Scripture does say that through faith in Jesus a person can please God with their life (Hebrews 11:6) because that label of "slave" has been removed. Listen to Paul speak of our freedom in Christ. **"Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life"** (vs. 1-2,4). Just in case someone might think that since God is so loving and forgiving I will purposely try to sin more so I can experience more of God's love and forgiveness, Paul wrote these verses. Hear Paul loud and clear – Sin is NOT freedom, but rather slavery. Does the criminal who has been freed from jail decide not to leave jail? Of course not. That would be foolish. Then why would a Christian choose sin (slavery) over doing God's will (freedom)? Through faith in Christ not only are we freed from the eternal consequences of Hell, but we are also freed to **"live a new life."** When the Devil comes tempting us to believe that real freedom does not involve personal/ group Bible Study, time spent in prayer, and gathering with other Christians we have the power through Christ to say "NO, that's slavery." When someone in this world comes tempting us to believe that real freedom involves living life on your own terms, even if it involves sin, we have the power to say, "NO, that's slavery." When our own sinful nature comes to us during those difficult times in life and says, "You should be worried about this," or during those fun times in life and says, "You don't really need God in your life," we have the ability to say "NO, that's slavery." That's Christian Freedom. Through faith in Christ we have been empowered to look the Devil, the world, and our own sinful natures in the eye and say, **"We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?"** (vs. 2). In other words, "Devil, people of this world, my own sinful self - you don't

own me. I'm free and I chose to serve God. In fact, we were **"created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do"** (Eph. 2:10).

The United States war for independence ended on September 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1783, over 7 years after the Declaration of Independence was famously signed. And then in 1812 we found ourselves battling with Great Britain again over free trade with other nations. In fact, in 1814, the English actually ransacked and set fire to the White House in Washington D.C. Then in the 1860's we had our own bloody Civil War over freedom for all people in the United States. In the 1960's and 1970's we had the Civil Rights movement in our country. Today we have the Black Lives Matter movement. And many people in our country, are very worried that some of our government leaders and other leaders that could get elected are leading and are going to lead our country down the path to losing our cherished freedoms with some of their policies. We might be the home of the brave and the land of the free, but enjoying our freedom, and giving that freedom to others, and retaining our freedom has been and continues to be a struggle. And the same is true when it comes to our Christian Freedom. It is a constant struggle on this earth to enjoy, give, and retain our freedom. In his letter to the Ephesian Christians Paul describes the struggle this way, **"You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness"** (Ephesians 4:22-24). The old sinful self is still a problem for us and will be until we get to Heaven. We need to keep putting it off, beating it down as we struggle and fight to say "NO" to temptation. We need to constantly and intentionally put on the new self which desires to say yes to God's way of doing things which is best for us and others. The good news is that in Christ we have the power to do that. We aren't slaves to sin anymore. Don't forget that! We are **"freed from sin"** and free **"to live a new life."** And when we lose a few battles to the devil, the world, and our own sinful selves – remember that Jesus already won the war for us. God doesn't view us as people who struggle with putting off the old self and putting on the new self. He views us as sinless and free people because of our faith in Christ Jesus as Savior. **"Count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus"** (vs. 11).

The United States ranks #1 in the world when it comes to people from foreign nations wanting to leave their country to live here. The United States also ranks #1 in the world when it comes to fewest people leaving our country to live in a different country. Why is that? One word – Freedom! If you wouldn't give up the freedoms that you enjoy as a citizen of the United States, then certainly don't give up the freedoms you enjoy for being a Christ follower. You are free to go Heaven! Out of thankfulness for this greatest gift remember this as well, **"you...were called to be free, but do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature, rather serve one another in love"** (Galatians 5:13). Amen.