



Volume 5, No. 7, July, 2017



God Heal Our Land

*This land we love of liberty,
 God gave to us to build,
 Its flag is stained with battles fought
 May we, too, keep it free.*

*We've failed to blaze trails for our own
 As those who went before,
 May we fulfill our purpose here,
 And may we pass it on.*

*Lift up our eyes so we may see,
 New hopes and dreams fulfilled,
 Till ev'ry child no fear may know,
 And peace all nations will.*

*Chorus:
 God heal our land,
 Its people bless,
 The stars upon its flag shine bright.
 The stripes of red for the blood and tears,
 Dear God, please heal our land.*

*Words: Alton Howard (1987)
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If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

2 Chronicles 7:14

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The Freedom of Choice

God made man and gave him free choice

I have the power to choose My Master – God or the devil

To follow Christ or self

To keep His commandments or not,

The will of God or self

To confess Christ or deny Him

His kingdom or the world

Righteousness or sin

Salvation or damnation

To be an heir or orphan

To die to live or live only to die

To love or to be indifferent

The truth or deception

To glorify God or self

To be an instrument of use or uselessness

Spiritual or physical

The eternal or the temporary

My final destination – heaven or hell.

He who is not with me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad (Matthew 12:30)

My thoughts at this moment...I will never make it to heaven by my own power. If it were not for grace and mercy extended to me through the blood of Christ, I would be lost. And while Christ died for all men, not all men will choose to obey and submit their lives to God

through Christ. God makes it easy to love Him in that He loved us first. It does not mean that we will not struggle to do what is right, but when we try and submit to His way, the blood of Christ continually washes us clean. It is the holiness of Christ through our choice of obedience that the Father sees us; and it is the Holy Spirit abiding in us that seals us for our heavenly home; and the truth is...if I do not choose God, in the end I will wish I had never physically lived. I love and pray for you all.

Kathy Webber, Rolla, Missouri

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RESPONSIBILITY OF FREEDOM

In the United States of America, the theme of freedom rings through the land. Our ancestors came here to gain the freedom to worship as they pleased. Were they all doing just what the Bible teaches? No. The Lord has never forced any people to worship Him; He gave all mankind the freedom to choose.

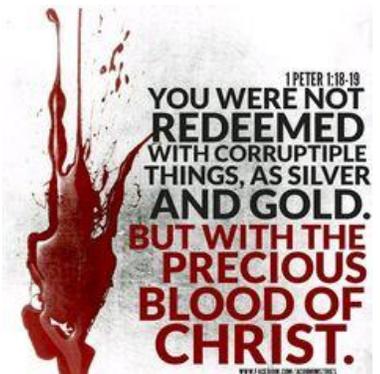
The scriptures speak on the subject of freedom. In John 8:32, Jesus taught His disciples, "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." One might ask, "Freedom from what?"

Paul told the Romans, "Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness? But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness." (Romans 6:16-18) In Galatians 5:1, he told the people to remain in this state of freedom, "Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage."

I saw a sign recently that read, "Responsibility is the price of Freedom." In like manner, freedom in the Lord comes with responsibility. Colossians 3:8-15 gives us a list of some of those responsibilities: "But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all. Therefore as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful."

Our behavior shows others how much we appreciate our freedom. Galatians 6:10 says, "Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith." Jesus tells us, "a new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." (John 13:34-35)

The saying, "Freedom is NOT free," has been around for many years. That is so true when it comes to our freedom in Christ. We are told in Romans 5:6-8, "For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."



The Bible compares it to Jesus buying us as slaves, then setting us free, "knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." (1 Peter 1:18-19) If you were in physical slavery, and someone did that for you, what

would you be willing to do to show your gratitude? Not only did He free us once, He continues to do that ... if we continue in His word. *“But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.”* (1 John 1:17)

On July 4th we celebrate our physical freedom by fireworks, parades, barbecues, and prayers. Let us vow to celebrate our spiritual freedom—not just once a year, but each and every day. Galatians 6:9 gives us these encouraging words, *“And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.”*

Jeanetta Watkins, Adamsville, Alabama



Blood and Freedom

What a blessed privilege it is to grow up as an American. We are the freest people human history has ever known.



However, freedom is never free; it is always costly. Our freedom and liberty did not come easily or cheaply—it cost the blood and sacrifice of many good men. There were those who died in the

Revolutionary War who were fighting for an idea, a concept, a belief that human beings should be free from tyranny and despotism, free to govern themselves.

Since that time, many American men and some women have died to preserve our freedom and to liberate other people, other nations. Americans fought against slavery in our own country. We have liberated the people of Europe from the yoke of Hitler and of Mussolini. Freedom was restored to the people in the Pacific nations who had been conquered by Japan. Kuwait was liberated from Iraq a few years ago.

The blood of thousands of Americans has been shed in many parts of the world for freedom, and that is a great and noble cause. However, every drop of blood shed by every human being in this world could never purchase true freedom, true liberty. The price tag for our freedom, our liberty from the bondage of sin was the precious blood of the Son of God. Possibly, His blood was first drawn in the beating by the Sanhedrin guards as they mocked Him and spat in His face. He was scourged by Pilate’s soldiers. It was a brutal, bloody beating with weapons designed to rip and tear the flesh on a man’s back. Many didn’t survive it. More blood flowed from

his wounded head from the thorns in His crown, and even more blood flowed from his hands and his feet when he was nailed to the cross. These were precursors to the blood that flowed when the soldier pierced his side on the cross. The blood that flowed freely from his side that day cleanses us from all unrighteousness. It frees us from the bondage of sin whereby we were held. It washes away all our unrighteousness, all our sins, all our unworthiness.

American freedom is a cherished right. We fight to preserve it, to maintain our liberty. Freedom in Christ—no words are adequate to describe its worth. Human thought and ambition cannot achieve it. Armies cannot preserve it. It is only ours through our obedience to the gospel and our allegiance and faith in the One who died to provide it. What incredible love! What amazing mercy! What liberating sacrifice!

Just as we have a symbol of American freedom in the Statue of Liberty, we have a symbol of our Christian freedom. It is the cross of Christ where his holy blood was shed to set us free from the bondage of sin and death.

Blood and freedom. They cannot be separated. There is no freedom without blood. There is no liberty without sacrifice. Praise God for His unfathomable love, for His mercy!

Evelyn Waite, Rolla, Missouri



INDEPENDENCE

This month our nation will celebrate our Independence; the fact we are a free and sovereign nation. We hold dear to our collective hearts the concept of National and personal freedom. We have special days to honor those who have fought for and, at times, have died for our freedom. America is a



nation founded on the belief we each have the freedom to do and be who we want to be. We set our path toward our goals with single-mindedness of purpose. My question is this. Do we hold just as dear our freedom to choose to be a child of the Living God? Do we exercise our freedom to worship Him as the Bible directs us? Do we understand when we become Christians through baptism we are declaring our INDEPENDENCE from satan, yet at the same time embracing our DEPENDENCE on Christ. Freedom and INDEPENDENCE are wonderful

things. God gives us freewill to choose who we want to be, how we live our lives, and where we will spend eternity. Have you declared your independence from satan and sin? Do you now depend on scripture and the Holy Spirit to direct your path? If not; why not? Declare yourself for all the world to see. Be sure you are on the path of freedom in Christ and celebrate your very own Independence Day!

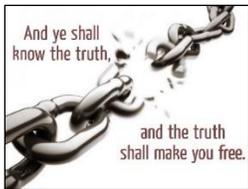
Peggy Bailey; Crosby County, Texas

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THE TRUTH SHALL SET YOU FREE

Jesus is quoted in John 8:32 as saying, "Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." When the Jews said they had never been slaves of anyone, He replied, "Very truly I tell you, everyone who sins is a slave to sin."

When we know the truth that Jesus is truly the Son of God, and we obey Him and are baptized into Him, then we are set free from the chains of sin. Does that mean



we will no longer sin? Of course not! Our freedom is in knowing that as long as we are doing our very best to live in the way Jesus would want us to live, His

powerful blood is cleansing us from our sin. When God looks at us through that blood of Jesus, He sees us as perfect and whole.

What kind of freedom does this bring? It can free us from the cares of this world. We know that we belong to God and that there is a place prepared for us. With this perspective in mind, do we need to worry whether or not our candidate was voted in as President? We look to a higher being for our guidance and know that a loving God is watching over His people.

Will it free us from troubles? No, but as we go through our struggles, whether they be physical illnesses, financial issues, relationship problems, etc., we have Jesus who understands the frailties of being human and will be beside us as we endure them.

Will it free us from the consequences of our actions? God created order out of chaos when He created this world. If you fall off a cliff, the law of gravity goes into effect and you will end up at the bottom of that cliff. While we can be forgiven of our sins, sometimes there are still consequences that will take place. Even though we must go through the effects of our sin, we can be whole in our spiritual life because of the forgiveness of our sin.

Will it free us from boasting? Knowing our sinful nature and the sacrifice that Jesus made to free us from our sins, how can we be anything but humble? To think that the Son of God cared enough for ME that He was willing to give His life? We can only boast in our Lord and His great mercy.

Will it free us from racism and hatred? God created this world, and He made each of us unique. He sent His Son to die for each and every one of us. Knowing my life and the mistakes I've made, how can I put myself as judge over anyone and what they have done? We all need mercy.

Will it free us from legalism? The Pharisees were keepers of the Law, yet Jesus said "If you were truly children of Abraham you would love me and accept me, rather than trying to find a way to kill me." When we truly understand the heart of Jesus, we want to follow Him and not just try to check off boxes to appear as if we are holy.

As members of His family, His church, and His body, we enjoy great freedoms. Let us always appreciate the freedoms found in Him.

Lorna Smith, Lubbock, Texas

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Writers Needed!

Do you like to write? If you write pieces about everyday life with spiritual applications, please contact me. Most pieces need to be 500-750 words or less, but there is some leeway on that. Themes of upcoming issues are available on request. Sunrise is a free publication, so there is no compensation. Articles will be edited for grammar, spelling, etc. Please contact me at: evelynwa57@gmail.com

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Sunrise is a monthly newsletter written and/or assembled by members of the Rolla Church of Christ. All previous issues can be accessed by going to <http://www.seekgrowserveandlove.org>. Click on the Resources tab, then on Sunrise Newsletter. You will find the current issue plus all previous issues.

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