

FREEDOM!

Freedom and the birthday of the USA represent an ongoing, 250-year-old experiment in self-governance, balancing the radical ideals of the Declaration of Independence with the continuous, often difficult work of building a more inclusive and perfect union.

- The 1776 Declaration established a vision that all people are created equal and possess inalienable rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. For generations, the U.S. has served as a global beacon for those escaping oppression.
- A living paradox is seen in how the founding ideals clashed heavily with the realities of early American society, particularly regarding the enslavement of Black Americans and the displacement of Indigenous peoples.
- Many view the American story as one of continuous possibility. Citizens must speak out and work together to pull the country closer to its highest ideals.

In Christian theology, spiritual freedom is "freedom from" and "freedom for".

Freedom From:

- Sin and the curse of the Law (Gal. 3:22, 13). Christ's sacrifice forgives (covers) our sin, and frees us from the guilt of our sin, and increasingly from the power of our sin. Foundational to Paul's teachings, believers are no longer justified (made right with God) by strict adherence to the Mosaic Law. Instead, we live under grace, with the ultimate 'law' being love.
- Earning Righteousness. There is much discussion among Christ-followers on doing versus believing for right standing with God. It comes down to *earning* versus *grace*. It is generally agreed that our good works, and obedience to God's directives--our effort and doing, are channels of God's ongoing grace to us, not obligations for justification, but expressions of the process of becoming holy (being sanctified). Everything good is the work of God.

We are set free from the controlling power of sin, from Law, from the curse (fear) of death, and from trying to earn God's loving acceptance.

The Apostle says: "*For freedom, Christ has set us free!*" What is this freedom for?

Freedom For (verses 5-6):

- Righteousness--"For through the Spirit, by faith, we ourselves eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness."

- Enjoying God and God's gifts! In Christ, through the Spirit, we are free to enjoy God's good gifts to the full, including intimate friendship with God--"*I will be their God and they shall be my people*" (Jer. 31:34).

Christian freedom is the freedom to know and enjoy God, to serve God and others, to enjoy belonging in the happiest family (through adoption), receive through faith the inheritance of everything God has to offer now and forever! Christian freedom is being and becoming what we were made for and who we were made to be--the beloved of God!

Here's to FREEDOM!

Pastor Duff