

Rev. Janet Doyle
Elmer Presbyterian Church
4th Sunday after Pentecost
July 3, 2022
Scripture: Galatians 5: 1-15

Sermon: Freedom in Christ

In the 1700's Great Britain was the most powerful nation on the earth. It had the strongest army and navy. They conquered most of the world and owned territories all over the world. The saying of the British Empire was "the sun never sets on the British Empire." Any place on earth that had any valuable resources, they sought to conquer and enslaved the peoples of those lands for their own financial gain.

In America, they acted a little differently with the colonies, but they heavily taxed them and abused them greatly. When the colonists finally had enough of the King, they fought back and gathered together to form their own country.

Tomorrow, we celebrate the founding of our nation. There will be picnics and fireworks and other activities happening across our country. It's a celebration of freedom called Independence Day.

The words of Patrick Henry ring in our ears and our hearts: "I know not what course others may take, but as for me, give me liberty, or give me death."

On July 2, 1776, the Continental Congress voted to announce and declare that they would accept nothing less than absolute freedom from England. Two days later, on July 4, 1776 the final draft of The Declaration of Independence was ratified and signed by those present and so our beautiful country of The United States of America was born.

So, tomorrow is our country's 246th Birthday; our Independence Day the day our freedom was born! There is no other country like The United States of America. With all our problems and faults, thousands upon thousands of people still want to come into our country because it is like no other country and the freedom we have here is like no other.

Many in our world don't have the freedoms that we do in our United States of America. Many who believe in Jesus as their Savior are imprisoned because they choose to follow their Lord and Savior. They are no longer free to live a life out on the streets, but in their prisons, they still are free to love and believe in Jesus, even to the point of death.

Imagine that you have been sentenced to a lifetime of hard labor in a Siberian prison camp. Day after day you are forced to go to work in freezing temperatures, doing backbreaking work in a mine or carrying heavy rocks. You work long days and nights, and you barely have enough food to keep you alive. You have no hope of escape and no hope of ever seeing your family again.

Then imagine one day the prison authorities tell you, you are all released from the prison. You are free to go! You are completely free from this whole system!

Everyone is hugging each other. Some are singing, others are dancing. If someone asked you "Why are you so happy?" what would you answer? You would tell them, "Because we are FREE!" We are free from something that was a burden to us, that enslaved us, that bound us and took our freedom. It is wonderful to finally be FREE!"

Isaiah the prophet, 700 years before Christ came, he foreshadows what the Messiah has come to do in Isaiah 61. It says, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed and to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to captives and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord..."

In Luke 4, when Jesus was in the village of Nazareth, his boyhood home, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath and read this verse to the people and said, "The Scripture you've just heard has been fulfilled this very day!"

America may have won its freedom from Britain, but when you look at our nation today, it becomes obvious that we are still slaves to sin. The only way we can be set free is to believe in Jesus Christ as our Savior.

Acts 13:38-39 says, "Therefore let it be known to you, that through him forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you and through him, everyone

who believes is freed from all things, from which you could not be freed through the law of Moses.”

In Galatians, Paul says that a person is not justified by just observing the law and that we are only justified by faith in Christ. Galatians was written to warn the believers to not live under the bondage of human-made traditions.

Jesus was carving a new way for people and went against the traditions and the laws of his time. He healed the sick on the Sabbath, he ate with sinners, he talked with women publicly, and he had close contact with Samaritans.

The ultimate aim of Jesus’ ministry was that we may be liberated from the bondage of sin. In Mark 10:45, Jesus said, “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” He came to give his life as a ransom. What is a ransom? Ransom is an amount of money or a thing, which is the cost of someone’s freedom. Jesus gave himself as a ransom so that we may be free from the burden, bondage and guilt of sin.

Paul says in ***Galatians 5:1***, “***So Christ has truly set us free. Now make sure that you stay free, and don’t get tied up again in slavery to the law.***”

The purpose of Christ coming to us and living with us was all a part of the plan of salvation because God wants us to be free from the bondage of sin, and that was the only reason that he chose the agony, pain and death of the cross so that we would have freedom in him and be saved.

Paul also talks about the bondage of sin in Romans 8:23, saying that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. So, if all have sinned, all need a liberator who can liberate them from the bondage of sin. Paul says that the wages of sin is death. It means all have to experience the eternal death because all have sinned, but there is a solution. He goes on to say that the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

So, the gift has overpowered the bondage of sin resulting in freedom from punishment and given the gift of eternal life to those who believe.

When we have freedom in Christ, we are freed from the spirit of fear. In Romans 8:15 Paul says, “For you did not receive the spirit of

slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons and daughters by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" If we are afraid of situations around us, then we have gone back again to the slavery from which Christ has delivered us.

Fear makes us a slave, slave to our situation and slave of Satan who always wants us to be under fear. Fear actually doubts the power of Jesus who says that all authority in heaven and on earth is given to him, and as his followers, that same authority has been granted to us as his followers.

If we have Freedom in Christ and follow in his steps, we will be at peace no matter what is happening around us in the world. Satan will try his best to make us believe that we are still in bondage to fear and sin, but the truth is that Christ has set us free from all bondages. He has finished the work on the cross because Jesus' final word was "IT IS FINISHED." It is in those words that we can rest in the FREEDOM OF CHRIST'S death and resurrection.

Freedom from the power of sin only happens with the work of the Holy Spirit. (2 Corinthians 3:17) Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is FREEDOM.

The Brazilian Walnut tree is majestic in size and strength, but this beautiful tree has one enemy, the Strangler Fig. When a Strangler Fig seed lands on the walnut tree, its roots begin to descend to the ground. As it grows, the vines of the fig squeeze and choke the walnut tree. The fig's grip on the tree becomes so great that the vine-encased tree slowly dies. Over time, all that is left are twisting vines in the form of a tree. The tree itself has long since disintegrated. Only a vine structure in the shape of a tree remains, while the inside is hollow and lifeless. That is the power of sin over a life without the Holy Spirit.

Yet, there is freedom from the power of sin when we live according to the influence of the Holy Spirit of God. The Bible teaches that, when we submit to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, we receive the indwelling gift of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the presence of God within us to lead us and direct us.

Galatians 5 contrasts the life lived according to the sinful nature with the life lived according to the Spirit. We can see the difference in the results of a life lived in the Spirit and in step with the Spirit and a life empty of the Holy Spirit. Our world today demonstrates that to us everyday as we see the violence, anger and brokenness of our world.

The Apostle Paul wrote both Romans and Galatians to tell the people that without the Holy Spirit, we are like a helpless insect caught in the spider web of sin. We can't free ourselves no matter how hard we try. We are powerless without the power of the Holy Spirit.

With the power of the Holy Spirit, we can begin to change our habits, conquer addictions, and find Freedom in Christ to live a new life.

It is only because of what Christ has done for us that we can be **FREE**. And because of what Christ has done, we can celebrate everyday as our Spiritual Day of Independence!