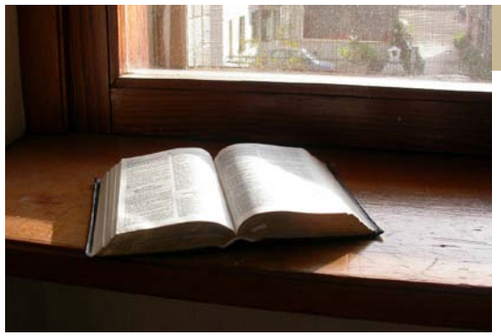


themselves are slaves of corruption; for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage" (2 Pet. 2:19).

Just as the freedom afforded by civil law must never be taken to the point that one's liberty leads to the restriction of the freedom of others, so it is with the liberty that is in Christ. Simply because I am freed from the cycle of sin and death in Christ, doesn't mean that I can act as if I can sin with impunity. Peter warned, **"For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men—as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God"** (1 Pet. 2:15-16). Paul warned the Christians in Galatia, who had been troubled by the false teaching that urged a return to Mosaic Law, **"For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another"** (Gal. 5:13). This is part of the problem with the modern false doctrine of *once-saved-always-saved.* It leads people to imagine that freedom *from* sin grants one the freedom *to* sin. Thanks be to God that in Christ we can be liberated from bondage to sin and death, but let us always see in this liberty the merciful opportunity to serve God in accordance with His will, recognizing, **"where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty"** (2 Cor. 3:17b).

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Faithful Sayings

BULLETIN OF THE OLSEN PARK CHURCH OF CHRIST

Services
Sunday: 9:00 AM
10:00 AM
11:00 AM
Wednesday: 7:00 PM

Elders:
Patrick Ledbetter
Brady McAlister
Jeff Nunn

Deacons:
Ben Hight
Blake McAlister
Walker McAnear
Sam Nunn
Lance Purcell
Justin Smiley
Kevin Wise
Trevor Yontz

Evangelist:
Kyle Pope

Celebrating Freedom

By Kyle Pope

This week our nation celebrates its annual memorial to our nation's independence. For many, it is a day of cookouts and time off work. It's a day of fireworks and fun with family. For those who served in the military, it's a day to remember their sacrifice and friends who gave the ultimate sacrifice. At the heart of it all, this day is about freedom—the freedom we enjoy and remembering the price paid to purchase it. Let's consider some things about what it means to celebrate freedom.

What Freedom Does Not Mean

In today's world, many imagine that freedom means anyone can do anything he or she might desire without limits or consequences. That is foolishness! When man has attempted this throughout history the result is lawless chaos that ultimately compromises the freedom of those who live under such conditions. Think about it, if my desire is to steal your property, your freedom to use and enjoy it is necessarily restricted. If your desire is to kill me, my freedom to live without fear is compromised. Speaking of the wickedness of Israel in the time of Hosea, the Lord explained that when, **"there is no truth or mercy or knowledge of God in the land,"** the result will be, **"swearing and lying, killing and stealing and committing adultery,"** as **"they break all restraint, with bloodshed upon bloodshed"** (Hos. 4:1b-2). When this happens, it doesn't result in freedom and happiness. Instead, **"the land will mourn; and everyone who dwells there will waste away"** (Hos. 4:3a). Law restricts some behavior in order

to allow the free exercise of other behavior. Properly, all human law only derives its validity, force, and authority from God's law. The Holy Spirit explains, **"Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint; but happy is he who keeps the law"** (Prov. 29:18). Thankfully, in this country we still enjoy the exercise of civil authority that restricts the sinful behavior of those who would rob us of our freedom to serve God. May it always be this way! Paul taught Christians to pray for our leaders, **"that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence"** (1 Tim. 2:2b).

Liberty in Christ

The gospel of Christ is a proclamation of freedom purchased by the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross (1 Pet. 1:17-19). James called it **"the law of liberty"** (Jas. 1:25; 2:12). This is a surprise to many. Our world rejects life in Christ because they see it as restrictive, but in reality it offers true liberty. This is true in many ways.

1. The Gospel Brought Freedom from Mosaic Law. The Law of Moses was intended as a **"tutor"** to bring the Jews under it to Christ (Gal. 3:24), but Peter explained that it was also a **"yoke"** which, **"neither our fathers nor we were able to bear"** (Acts 15:10). He was not saying it was *impossible* to keep. God told the Israelites they could **"do it"** (Deut. 30:14). The problem was that while it brought the **"knowledge of sin"** (Rom. 3:20), it offered no ultimate way to overcome sin. As a result, it was a **"law of sin and death"** (Rom. 8:2). Sin demanded the death of a sacrifice and resulted in spiritual death for the one who committed it.

Jesus offered the ultimate sacrifice for sin **"once for all"** (Heb. 10:10). The gospel of Christ liberated the Jew from this cycle of sin and death. Paul declared, **"For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death"** (Rom. 8:2). When false teachers came into Galatia teaching Christians to return to Mosaic Law, Paul taught them, **"Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage"** (Gal. 5:1). Christ offered liberation from the restrictions of Mosaic Law, but also from the problem of sin that resulted from law with no ultimate sacrifice. While modern man has never been under Mosaic Law, all are **"under law toward Christ"** (1 Cor. 9:21). This problem of sin with no sacrifice granting ultimate forgiveness is faced by all who live outside of Christ. Only in Christ can freedom from sin be found.

2. The Gospel Brings Freedom from Sin. We imagine that if we could only do whatever we want we would be truly free, but Jesus explained, **"whoever commits sin is a slave of sin"** (John 8:34b). True freedom doesn't rest in unrestrained behavior, but in service to Christ. Jesus went on to say, **"if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed"** (John 8:36). Sin is the violation of God's law (1 John 3:4), the failure to do good as revealed in God's law (Jas. 4:17), or acting with doubt (Rom. 14:23). The consequence of sin is spiritual death, which is separation from fellowship with God (Rom. 6:23; Isa. 59:1-2). To die in sin is to remain eternally separated from God in eternal punishment (2 Thess. 1:9-10).

Only Christ offers deliverance from sin through obedience to the gospel. Paul told the Romans, **"For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin"** (Rom. 6:5-7). In baptism one is **"united together"** with Christ **"in the likeness of His death."** We die to our old sins that we might be **"freed from sin."** Yet, this freedom brings responsibility. Paul continued:

> **And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness. For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness** (Rom. 6:18-20).

To enjoy freedom as a citizen of the United States carries responsibilities. We must obey its laws, honor its leaders, and pay taxes to support it. So it is in Christ. Yes, we must obey the Law of Christ, but all that it demands of us (as with all Divine Law), is **"for our good always"** (Deut. 6:24). The Christian has, **"been set free from sin,"** we **"become slaves of God,"** and **"have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life"** (Rom. 6:22). This leads us to recognize another liberty that comes in Christ…

3. The Gospel Brings Freedom from Death. When man first sinned, it separated him from fellowship with God—spiritual death (Gen. 2:17). All who have followed this example have suffered the same consequence (Rom. 5:12). Yet, in addition to this, a consequence of Adam's sin has been a life deprived of access to the tree of life in a world of pain, disease, decay, and ultimately physical death (Gen. 3:16-24). The resurrection of Christ paved the way for those saved in Christ one day to attain liberation from pain, decay, and death itself. Paul wrote, **"if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you"** (Rom. 8:11). Can you imagine a life free of pain, illness, and the loss of loved ones? Paul taught, **"the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God"** (Rom. 8:21). Those outside of Christ will also experience a resurrection on the Day of Judgment, but it will be a **"resurrection of condemnation"** (John 5:29). This will not be liberation from corruption, but an eternal sentence to the **"bondage of corruption."** Only Christ offers liberty from death.

Freedom Must Not Be Abused

We noticed at the beginning of our study that unrestricted freedom of behavior ultimately results in robbing others of freedom. If one does not yield his will in obedience to the **"law of liberty"** found in Christ, he actually forfeits his own freedoms in the process. Peter warned of false teachers who advocated a licentious lifestyle. He wrote, **"While they promise them liberty, they**