

“By Christ We Are Free!”

Psalm 33:12-22

Intro. – For one hundred years, the Statue of Liberty (Lady Liberty) stood with her torch held high. She welcomed to America “the huddled masses, yearning to breathe free.” But her copper cloak had corroded. Her supporting structure weakened, needed reinforcement. Bluntly, the famous statue in New York Harbor was deteriorating... From all across America, people started giving to preserve her. Lee Iacocca, chaired the statue’s restoration effort. The initial goal of 66 million was not only met, but, far surpassed. So, on her 100th birthday, 1986, Lady Liberty, stood renewed, strong as ever, bearing a silent testimony to the love of freedom in the hearts of so many living in America and around the world.

Our national anthem says we are the “land of the free.” Our founding fathers came to this new land in search of freedom. The constitution of these United States of America guarantees every citizen certain freedoms. Such helps us recognize the blessing we have from God in being a part of this nation.

All of this brings me to this question: Are we as free as we use to be or as free as we can/ought to be? Not intending to make this political, but would like to make this a Biblical matter. You see, the Bible is a book about freedom. This holy book is God’s final and complete revelation to us. This is how God is letting us know what is best and how we can enjoy the life He has given. You see, the Bible is not just a book about getting to heaven (though certainly that), but, is also about life and freedom.

John 10:10 says, “...I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.”

John 8:32 says, “And you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.”

John 14:6 says, “...I am the way, the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.”

My point in this – freedom, ultimate freedom does not come through government, legislation, rules and regulations... i.e. freedom does not come through man – freedom/peace comes only through Christ the Lord.

Purpose: to reaffirm in our minds that freedom/peace comes only in/through Christ the Lord!

Want to share with you three areas in which Christ Jesus can and does set men free:

I CHRIST ALONE SETS NATIONS FREE

A. A Nation Founded Upon God

1. Pericles built civilization upon culture alone and miserably failed in the process.
2. The “Caesars” built civilization upon power/might... and miserably failed
3. America was different – initially built upon the firm foundation of God:
 - a. pilgrims landed on Plymouth Rock = immediately knelt in prayer giving thanks...
 - b. Continental Congress at an impasse = Ben Franklin called for prayer...
 - c. first coins = picture Moses prominent... today “In God We Trust” remains on all our money.
4. Our forefathers *intentionally* were building on a firm foundation by building American upon God!

B. A Nation True to God

1. As long as this nation continues to build upon this foundation... it cannot and will not fail!
2. Illus. – One time President of S. American country was talking to a Roger Babson concerning the differences between South and North America. Babson responded: “South America was settled by men who were seeking gold, but North American was settled by men seeking after God.”
3. For America to be great and continue to be so she must be as Abe Lincoln said, “Not concerned with whether God is on our, but whether we are on His side.”
4. History has shown when nations forget God, they soon cease to exist: e.g. Egypt, Greece, Persia
 - a. 7/4/88 ODB = “Decline and Fall of Roman Empire” (E. Gibbon) 5 key reasons:
 - 1) Undermining of the sanctity of the home...
 - 2) Increasing taxes and spending of public money...
 - 3) Increasing obsession for pleasure...
 - 4) Decadence of people (i.e. loss of morals)...
 - 5) Faith fading into mere form and lacking in substance...

- b. 7/4/90 ODB = French writer Alexis de Tocqueville: “I sought for the greatness of the United States in her commodious harbors, her ample rivers, her fertile fields, and boundless forests – and it was not there. I sought for it in her rich mines, her vast world commerce, her public school system, and in her institutions of higher learning – and it was not there. I looked for it in her democratic Congress and her matchless Constitution – and it was not there. Not until I went into the churches of America and heard her pulpits flame with righteousness did I understand the secret of her genius and power. America is great because America is good, and if America ever ceases to be good, America will cease to be great!”

America’s freedom isn’t in things, allies, or power. Her freedom is in God, He alone sets nations free!

II CHRIST ALONE SETS CHURCHES FREE

- John 17 we read the Lord’s prayer where Jesus prays for “unity on the basis of truth – His Word”
- today’s “religious world” is full of manmade regulations, rules, and ideas all of which is the source for the divisiveness so evident in the world today
- Restoration Movement (early 1800’s) came along not to reform but to restore NT Christianity to set men free. Here is but a sample of sayings used to remind then and now our need to *restore* NT Xtianity:

A. “No Creed but Christ”

1. So often today if a person wants to become a follower of Christ, some creed is brought out pressuring that person to accept all sorts of rules and regulations of man-made origin before they are accepted into the worship and fellowship of that local church...
2. Any “creed” that goes past what the Bible says has gone too far, and any creed has less than what the Bible says is not enough! My Point? Why then have any creed. Why not the Bible alone?!
3. The Bible gives no creed but Christ and His Word!

B. “No Book but the Bible”

1. Today, so many groups have books they put “on a par” with the Bible...
2. Many of these books are supposedly “based on the Bible” – If such is true, why have them?
3. The Bible alone is “truth” – “truth” is always the basis for unity = “No book but the Bible” is a solid principle because it is based on a timeless promise of God!

C. “No Name but Christian”

1. What I’m about to say, I say in all love for Christ, His Church and the lost world: Christ prayed for unity of His followers in order for the world to believe. I wonder how the world can believe when the religious world identifies themselves by so many different, human based names?
2. Let’s call ourselves by that one name the Bible says is “above every other name.” Let’s call ourselves after the One who died for us. Let’s simply call ourselves CHRISTIANS!
3. In short, we do not claim to be the only Christians, but, we do want to be “Christians only”!

By following God’s Word, the local church can be free = No creeds but Christ, no book but the Bible, no name but Christ!

III CHRIST ALONE SETS SINNERS FREE

A. Man Has a Problem

1. Look how much \$ is spent on alcohol, drugs, & entertainment just to “escape” and/or “have fun.”
 - a. Illus. – Lou Harris (the pollster) recently said, “Americans are more discouraged and disillusioned than any time since taking poles...”
 - b. Las Vegas, NV = called “Fun City” = suicide capital of the world...
2. What’s the problem?
 - a. Blaise Pascal (French scientist/philosopher): “There is a God shaped vacuum in the heart of every man which cannot be filled by any created thing but only by God the Creator made known through Jesus Christ.”
 - b. such agrees with Bible – Romans 3:23 “*For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*”

- 1) Legal problem – we’re guilty... we’ve broken the law -- there are consequences to pay...
- 2) Moral problem – we’re sick (sin sick)... deserving of separation from God’s presence...
- c. God alone cares about this matter – Romans 5:6 *“For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.”* Romans 5:8 *“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”*

B. Christ is the Solution

1. Bible makes clear = God cares! Romans 6:23 *“For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*
 - a. personal sin separates us from Holy God... Righteousness of God can’t tolerate sin!
 - b. punishment for our sins must be paid in order to restore you and me to fellowship with God
 - c. Jesus “paid it all” i.e. Christ paid for the punishment of your sins, my sins, everyone’s sins
2. More – John 3:16 *“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.”*
 - a. Luke 13:3 *“I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.”*
 - b. Matthew 10:32-33 *“Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven.”*
 - c. John 3:5 *“Jesus answered, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.’”*
 - immersion into Christ = burial and resurrection = point/time grace is given
3. Now, are these matters people received to be “added to the Church” in the New Testament? YES – grace is God’s plan for FREEDOM = Saved BY GRACE, THROUGH FAITH, AT BAPTISM FOR GOOD WORKS!

Conclusion: Christ alone offers freedom today – to nations who will trust Him, to local churches who will follow Him, to individuals who will serve Him!

1829 George Wilson was sentenced to hang for robbery and murder. President Andrew Jackson “pardoned” Wilson, but Wilson refused to accept the pardon. This resulted in great confusion... The Supreme Court was called upon to make a judgment... Chief Justice John Marshall wrote the following: “A pardon is a piece of paper the matter of which depends upon its acceptance by the person implicated. It is hardly to be supposed that one under sentence of death would refuse to accept pardon. But, if it is refused, it is no pardon. George Wilson must be hanged.” And hanged he was!

The point is clear. Grace is a gift, but unless this gift is received on the terms set forth by the gift giver, Christ Jesus the Lord, the wages of sin will be the ultimate end.