

Freedom 2018

Pastor James Foley – Sunday, June 24, 2018

Main Theme – Identifying and celebrating the freedoms afforded us by and through Christ Jesus

WORSHIP & PRAYER

COMMUNION

- **COMMUNION Notes**
 - We will observe Communion at the close of service

WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **Upcoming Events (REGULAR)**
 - WM – Tuesday Evening, July 10 (6:30–8:30pm)
 - Men's Breakfast – Saturday, July 14 (9–10:15am)

MORNING OFFERING

At this time, I want to call forth our ushers.

-Thank you for your faithfulness in giving to the Lord/His work

-Your giving fuels the work of Christ in and through this church

May the Lord bless you as you give! May you experience His faithfulness in kind!

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- **DISMISSAL OF CHILDREN FOR CHILDREN'S CHURCH**
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VIDEO

PLAY (God Bless America) – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WPWqY1nSkig>

OPENING REMARKS PT. 1

The SONG that we just heard—beautifully performed by Celine Dion—is one of the most well-known patriotic songs in the history of our great republic. Penned by Irving Berlin (White Christmas) in the early decades of the Twentieth Century, this song is a PRAYER that calls upon the Lord for His continued blessing, guidance and preservation.

KEY – I ECHO the sentiments of this song and prayer: May God Bless America!

OPENING REMARKS PT. 2

Though we are an IMPERFECT union—and despite the many failures, shortcomings and inadequacies of this nation—I believe it to be the GREATEST nation on the face of the earth. Moreover, I would CHOOSE TO LIVE nowhere else!

It has been my privilege in 40-years of living to TRAVEL to many foreign destinations (e.g., Canada, Spain, Ecuador, Ghana, N. Ireland, Haiti and beyond). I have thoroughly enjoyed my travels and my tenure in each of these places. However, there is NO place like home!

OPENING REMARKS PT. 3

There are MANY qualities that make our nation great. Far more than I have time to enumerate:

- We could speak of its breathtaking beauty and splendor
- We could speak of its prosperity and ‘standard of living’
- We could speak of the ingenuity/industry of its people
- We could speak of the great generosity of its citizenry
- We could speak of the diversity & unity of its people

KEY – Yet, if I were pressed to identify the single greatest characteristic of this nation, I would say this: The United States of America provides the greatest freedoms for the greatest number of people anywhere in the world. FREEDOM is the foundation upon which our greatness rests.

FREEDOM PT. 1

NOTE – FREEDOM was the HALLMARK of this nation from its very inception...

In July of 1776, our founding fathers met in Philadelphia, PA to sign a 1,307-word document penned by Thomas Jefferson. That DOCUMENT was the Declaration of Independence, which declared to Great Britain that the American colonies were to be free from their rule...

i.e., A nation that was established upon the “self-evident” truths that “all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”

FREEDOM PT. 2

KEY – From the very INCEPTION of our nation, freedom was its FOUNDATION! And all of these years later—242 to be exact—IT STILL IS! Consider for a moment the VARIOUS freedoms that we enjoy as citizens of this great nation:

- We are free to live, live freely and pursue happiness
- We are free to worship without fear or “intimidation”
- We are free to express our minds and promulgate ideas
- We are free to criticize our leaders w/out repercussion
- We are free to be “for or against’ any political process
- We are free to conduct “lawful and orderly” protests
- We are free to be industrious—to dream & “create”
- We are free to achieve by the “sweat of our brow”
- We are free to own, enjoy and pass on property
- We are free to travel freely in these 50 states

...TO NAME JUST A FEW...

FREEDOM PT. 3

What precious freedoms we ENJOY as American citizens!

KEY – Of course, we do well to REMEMBER that our freedoms have come at a COST. It has become a bit of a clichéd slogan in our culture, but the following statement remains true: “FREEDOM IS NOT FREE”

NOTE – Freedom has come at a high price from our nation’s beginnings. Fifty-six brave patriots signed the aforementioned Declaration of Independence. Consider the price these men paid...

- Twelve had their homes ransacked and burned
- Five were captured and tortured by the British
- Two lost their sons in the Revolutionary War
- One had two sons captured in the Conflict
- Nine fought and died from war-wounds

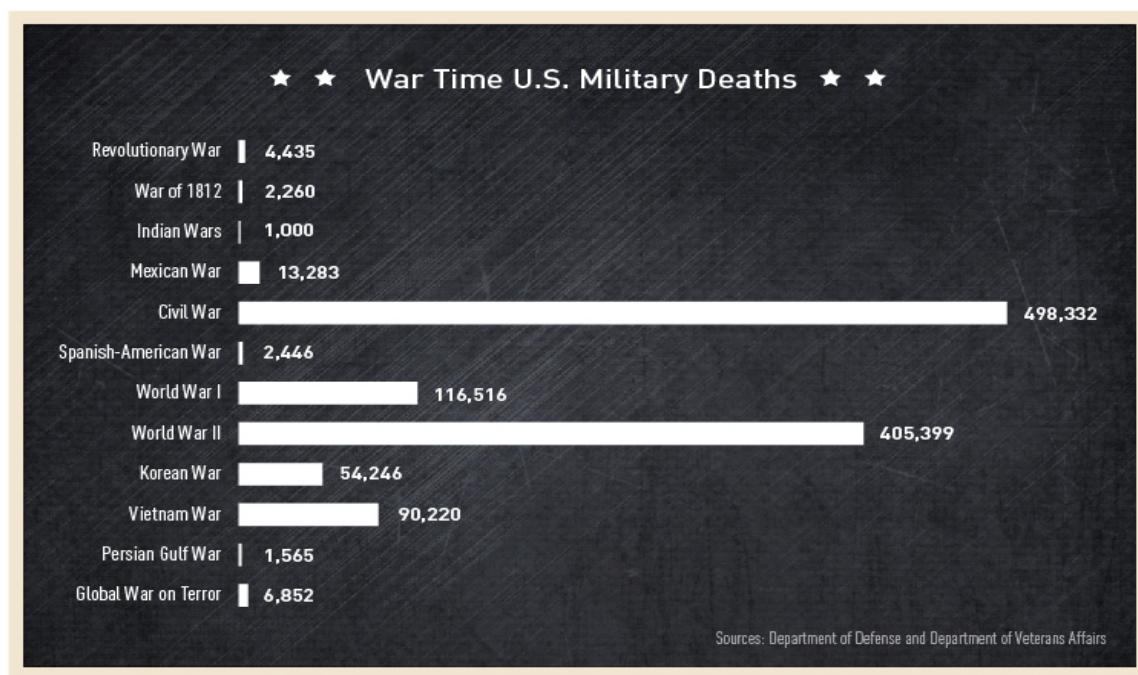
-Carter Braxton of Virginia—a wealthy planter and trader—saw his ships swept from the seas by the British Navy. He sold his home to pay his debts and died in rags.

-Thomas McKean of Delaware was so hounded by the British that he was forced to move his family almost constantly. He served in Congress without pay and died a very poor man.

-Thomas Nelson of Virginia had his home seized by the British at the Battle of Yorktown, which they used as a command post. He urged General George Washington to open fire on it. The home as destroyed and Nelson died bankrupt.

FREEDOM PT. 3

KEY – TODAY, as we worship in security and comfort, we do so because of the countless thousands of young men and women who gave their “last full measure of devotion.” These figures DIED in forsaken places with names not remembered so that we might know the PLEASURE and PRIVILEGE of FREEDOM.



NOTE – IN TOTAL, app. 1.2–1.3 million soldiers have died in the horrific theater of war. As Thomas Campbell NOTED some years ago: “The patriot’s blood is the seed of freedoms tree.”

ILL – In my studies, I came across the following LETTER from Abraham Lincoln to a mother who lost five sons in the Civil War. This note highlights the true cost of war in a very PERSONAL manner. Consider:

Dear Madam,

I have been shown in the files of the War Department a statement of the Adjutant General of Massachusetts that you are the mother of five sons who have died gloriously on the field of battle.

I feel how weak and fruitless must be any word of mine which should attempt to beguile you from the grief of a loss so overwhelming. But I cannot refrain from tendering you the consolation that may be found in the thanks of the Republic they died to save.

I pray that our Heavenly Father may assuage the anguish of your bereavement, and leave you only the cherished memory of the loved and lost, and the solemn pride that must be yours to have laid so costly a sacrifice upon the altar of freedom.

Yours, very sincerely and respectfully,

A. Lincoln

TRANSITIONS

Q. How many of you are grateful for the freedoms we enjoy as citizens of this great nation?

Q. How many of you are grateful for those who have sacrificed/died to provide such freedoms?

NOTE – Allow me to note that we who have gathered here today are NOT simply Americans. NO! In fact, we are something of so much greater and lasting value/wonder: WE ARE FOLLOWERS of Christ and CHILDREN of the Living God...

KEY – Certainly we SHOULD be aware of and cherish the freedoms we enjoy as Americans (and those who have provided it). However, we SHOULD be even MORE aware of and cherish to a GREATER degree the freedoms we have in CHRIST—OUR GREAT LIBERATOR!

Galatians 5:1 (NIV)

It is for freedom that Christ has set us free.

NOTE – I DON'T think we understand the degree to which the NT speaks to the FREEDOMS we have been given in and through Christ. Though we grasp the freedoms we have as Americans, do we comprehend the reality/significance of the freedoms we have as BELIEVERS? These are sentiments I would like to consider with the time we have remaining this morning (non-exhaustive treatment FYI). LET'S DELVE IN...

FREEDOM #1

FREEDOM 1 – We have been freed from the PENALTY of sin.

There are some truths found within the Word of God SO pivotal/foundational, that to MISS them is to MISS the main point of Scripture! To DISMISS them is the gravest of errors and to PERVERT them carries the greatest of consequences. I want to enumerate TWO at this time:

1) Every Human is Sinful

i.e., Everyone who has ever been born as the product of a man and a woman is guilty of violating the righteous standards of God. We are ALL GUILTY of breaking divine, eternal law...

Romans 3:23a (NIV)

23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...

KEY – If we are honest, there is NO debating this point. Anyone here claiming to be perfect? In fact, Scripture is SO adamant on this point, the apostle John states that IF anyone claims to be without sin, he deceives himself and the truth is NOT in him.

NOTE – Paul powerfully articulates the reality of man’s sinfulness in Romans 3:10–18. Consider:

Romans 3:10–18 (NIV)

10 As it is written:

“There is no one righteous, not even one;

11 there is no one who understands;

there is no one who seeks God.

12 All have turned away,

they have together become worthless;

there is no one who does good,

not even one.” [Ps. 14:1-3; 53:1-3; Ecc. 7:20]

13 “Their throats are open graves;

their tongues practice deceit.” [Ps. 5:9]

“The poison of vipers is on their lips.” [Ps. 140:3]

14 “Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness.” [Ps. 10:7]

15 “Their feet are swift to shed blood;

16 ruin and misery mark their ways,

17 and the way of peace they do not know.” [Is. 59:7, 8]

18 “There is no fear of God before their eyes.” [Ps. 36:1]

This leads me to the SECOND truth I want to note in connection with this overarching point...

2) The Penalty for Sin is Death

Romans 6:23a (NIV)

23 For the wages of sin is death...

KEY – Because of SIN, humanity as a whole—both individually and collectively—stands CONDEMNED before God. We are ALL guilty and WORTHY of the severest of punishments: DEATH.

- Spiritual (Death) –Separation from God in this life...
- Physical (Death) – Separation of our Bodies & Spirits...
- Eternal/2nd Death – Separation from God in/for Eternity...

NOTE – Of all the PROBLEMS we face in this life (Individually and collectively), NOTHING COMPARES to the issue of our natural spiritual posture before God. The death sentence which we ALL carry is our most crushing problem AND THE ONE that we are most POWERLESS to change. i.e., There is NOTHING that we can do to remedy our sin-issue before God!

Q. What could be worse than the CONDEMNATION we face due to sin?

KEY – However, REMEDY is found in the Cross of Christ. God—in His infinite love—has made a way that we can be FREED from the cost and consequence of our sin:

John 3:16 (NIV)

16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

2 Corinthians 5:21 (NIV)

21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

NOTE – This text speaks to the idea of EXCHANGE. Our SIN was placed upon Christ. In exchange, we receive His purity and innocence (RIGHTEOUSNESS), that we might LIVE and NOT die! For the Christian, there is FREEDOM for condemnation and the penalty of sin!

Romans 8:1–2 (NIV)

1 . . . there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, 2 because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death.

FREEDOM #2

FREEDOM 2 – We have been freed from the SLAVERY of sin.

NOTE – In Scripture, sin is characterized in several ways:

- It is an offense that requires pardon (just noted)
- It is a defilement that requires divine cleansing
- It is a defeat that must be reversed in ‘victory’
- It is an estrangement requiring reconciliation
- It is a debt that requires divine cancellation

KEY – Sin is also characterized as an agent of slavery/bondage.

John 8:34 (NIV)

34 . . . “Very truly I tell you, everyone who sins is a slave to sin.”

NOTE – i.e., As a human, NOT ONLY must I bear the PENALTY of sin, but I am ALSO under its MASTERY. Everyone is born into a spiritual position of subjection and subjugation to sin. Sin—by nature—is a force within fallen man that...

- Binds
- Controls
- Dominates
- Manipulates
- Exerts its Will

i.e., Sin is a brutal and unyielding task-master that commands us to do its BIDDING, leading each of us to naturally commit ACTIONS, speak WORDS, think thoughts and fulfill DESIRES that are contrary to our design, violate God’s ways, break His heart, and lead to destruction.

ILL – Sin’s mastery is APPARENT in the lives of sinful man. How many live in utter bondage to their own lusts; greed/materialism; deceit and deceptions; selfishness and self-centeredness; anger and rage; pride; addictions, etc.

NOTE – Sin’s so powerful, we cave in to its power EVEN WHEN we know what is right and good! The apostle Paul articulates this point in Romans 7 (speaking of his life when left to its own devices]. Consider the following:

Romans 7:14–24 (NIV)

14 We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. 15 I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. 16 And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. 17 As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. 18 For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. 19 For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. 20 Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.

21 So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. 22 For in my inner being I delight in God’s law; 23 but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. 24 What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death?

KEY – Paul ANSWERS his own question & identifies REMEDY for this sin-issue in the next verse:

Romans 7:24–25 (NIV)

24 What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? 25 Thanks be to God, who delivers [i.e., FREES] me through Jesus Christ our Lord!

Romans 7:24–25 (NLT)

24 Oh, what a miserable person I am! Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin and death? 25 Thank God! The answer is in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Romans 6:22 (NIV)

22 But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life.

KEY – This was emphasized by Christ in the Gospels...

John 8:34, 31 (NIV)

34 . . . “Very truly I tell you, everyone who sins is a slave to sin.”

31 To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. 32 Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

KEY – You see, we who are followers of Christ have NOT just been FREED from the PUNISHMENT of sin. We have been FREED from its CONTROL and DOMINION as well...

- We DON'T have to follow the ways of this world
- We DON'T have to yield to destructive temptations & desires
- We DON'T have to corrupt ourselves with that which leads to death

KEY – There is a **POWER** at work within us that has broken the power of sin and released the life of Christ—a **LIFE** that manifests in love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and self-control! The image of God within us has been **RESTORED!**

NOTE – I am **NOT** saying that I will never be tempted to sin or that I will never sin. Only that the power of Christ that forgives **ALSO** brings about **LIBERATION/FREEDOM** from the tyranny of sin, **THAT I MIGHT SERVE HIM IN EVER-INCREASING WAYS!**

FREEDOM #3

FREEDOM 3 – We have been freed from the FEAR of death.

NOTE – My final point is a brief—but vital—point. There is a wide **RANGE** of fears people can experience. All you have to do is google the word ‘phobia’ and you will get a list of incredible and—in some cases—unimaginable fears. But **ONE** overriding fear exists universally in this world: the **FEAR OF DEATH.**

In my studies, I came across a profound **TEXT** that addresses this reality:

Hebrews 2:14–15 (NIV)

14 Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil— 15 and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.

Hebrews 2:14–15 (NLT)

Because God’s children are human beings—made of flesh and blood—the Son also became flesh and blood. For only as a human being could he die, and only by dying could he break the power of the devil, who had the power of death. 15 Only in this way could he set free all who have lived their lives as slaves to the fear of dying.

KEY – Christ **BROKE** the power of the one who had the power of death. In so doing, he brought freedom to all who lived their lives as slaves to the fear of dying! As a follower of the Christ who holds the keys of death, hell and the grave, I can **EXCLAIM** with the apostle Paul...

1 Corinthians 15:54–55 (NIV)

54 When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: “Death has been swallowed up in victory.”

55 “Where, O death, is your victory?
Where, O death, is your sting?”

KEY – I’m free from the fear of **DYING/DEATH** because I know that Christ has something wondrous prepared for me and He will see me through at the moment of my departure. Glory...

THE PRICE

NOTE – The THREE freedoms we noted...

- Freedom from the penalty of sin
- Freedom from the slavery of sin
- Freedom from the fear of death

...Were NOT free for Christ to provide. They have come at a PRICE!

KEY – Just as our EARTHLY freedoms have come at a price (i.e., the lost lives, broken bodies and shed blood of willing soldiers), the freedoms we enjoy IN CHRIST have come at a price (i.e., the lost life, broken body and shed blood of a willing Savior).

-Thus, I can find NO BETTER WAY to close this sermon/service than with COMMUNION.

COMMUNION

Ushers, if you would begin to distribute the elements of the Lords' Supper...

As the emblems are distributed, CONSIDER the cost the Lord paid for your freedoms...

- The FREEDOM to be free from condemnation
- The FREEDOM to know spiritual liberation
- The FREEDOM to have/possess hope

Freedoms that have come through His brokenness and death (wafer & juice = body & blood)...

1 Corinthians 11:23–26 (NIV)

23 For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, 24 and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." 25 In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." 26 For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.