

Fil-Am Community Church
Pastor David Bennett
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“Independence Day “

Good morning Fil-Am Community Church as always it is so good to see you here this morning, there are many other places you could be but the fact that you chose to celebrate our family reunion with us this Sunday is greatly appreciated and not taken for granted.

In just 2 days we will celebrate the 4th of July!

This holiday is a special one in our country, because it is a day we celebrate patriotism, liberty, freedom, and what makes our nation great.

Tuesday marks 241 years since our Founding Fathers gave us our national birth certificate. It is day known as “Independence Day” because of the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

And in that document delivered on July the 4th, 1776, we read of a belief that all people have rights given to them by their Creator.

The document only has 1321 words, it takes just eight minutes to read, and God is mentioned four times, twice at the beginning and twice at the end.

The second paragraph of the Declaration of Independence begins with these words: "*We hold these truths to be self-evident, 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.*"

The closing words of their Declaration solemnly state: "*With a firm reliance on the protection of **divine Providence**, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes & our sacred Honor.*"

“**Endowed by their Creator**” and “**Divine Providence.**” Both of these statements, both of these important phrases point to the historical fact that what made America great was not just its political leaders, or military conquest, or a booming economy... but a dependence upon God Almighty.

Who were the men who were willing to sign?

They were educated, civilized men who were willing to sacrifice everything for a cause that they believed in. And history shows us that they paid the price for that bravery.

Of the 56 signers of the Declaration, few were long to survive.

- ✓ Five were captured by the British as traitors, and tortured before they died.
- ✓ Twelve had their homes ransacked and burned.
- ✓ Two lost their sons in the Revolutionary Army,
- ✓ Another had two sons captured.

And though few of them benefited from their bravery, and most lost everything they owned, not one recanted his original declaration of independence.

These men were courageous and valiant and brave and because of them and others, we have the privilege of being here today, and living in the greatest country in the world.

Psalm 33:12 (NIV) says, *“Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, the people he chose for his inheritance.”*

Adams said that in observing the 4th of July, *“It ought to be commemorated as the day of deliverance by solemn acts of devotion to God Almighty.”*

In fact, as John Adams signed the Declaration of Independence he said, "Whether we live or die, sink or swim, succeed or fail, I stand behind this Declaration of Independence.

And if God wills it, I am ready to die in order that this country might experience freedom."

It was that kind of patriotism which led men, armed with little more than hunting rifles, to engage in battle with what was the most powerful nation in the world.

Many of our forefathers paid a terrible price in the Revolutionary War, but finally they won the victory so that you & I might be citizens of this "land of the free & home of the brave."

How many of you recognize the name Patrick Henry? He's the guy that said, "Give me liberty or give me death."

In His Last Will & Testament ... He wrote, *"I have now given everything I own to my children. There is one more thing I wish I could give them & that is Christ. Because if they have everything I gave them & don't have Christ, they have nothing."*

We live in a Nation today that tries to give our kids everything... but Christ.

- ✓ The latest clothes,
- ✓ The latest technology,
- ✓ The latest toys,
- ✓ The latest gadgets,
- ✓ The latest styles...

And our kids have to be involved in every activity under the sun.

How many parents send their kids to church, or vacation Bible School, but don't attend themselves and churches become more of a babysitting tool than a place of refuge and strength.

How many children really have no home church that they belong to and are discipled in, but are simply dropped off at the next church for the next activity?

You see this is what we have become.

What has happened in our generation? We have told God that we...

- ✓ We don't need the Bible,
- ✓ We don't need the church,
- ✓ We don't need God in the running of our nation,
- ✓ We don't need God in our schools
- ✓ And sadly we don't need God even in our homes.

Today we enjoy freedom in Christ, because of the sacrifice he made for us.

Our freedom was bought with the cost of His life. Today the Gospel of Jesus Christ declares your independence from sin and freedom through faith in His blood and resurrection.

Galatians 5:1 (NASB), *"It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery."*

Paul wrote these words to the church Galatia that was being told that in order to be saved you must embrace Judaism. You must become a Jew.

Paul is writing out of concern for these people because they are being "**thrown into confusion**" by those trying to pervert the message of the gospel.

Today there are many trying to sell us on a misrepresentation of the Gospel and a rewriting of History that throwing many into confusion.

People don't know the Word, they don't know the truth, and therefore many are being burdened by a yoke of slavery... just another form of slavery.

- ✓ Legalism
- ✓ Works
- ✓ Religion
- ✓ Belonging to an organization rather than to a faith.

How easily are people being thrown into confusion believing that they are in fact going to heaven through a false gospel?

- ✓ How many people are being sold on a false idea of Christ,

- ✓ Or a false idea of the Bible,
- ✓ Or a false idea of church,
- ✓ Or a false idea of salvation

The purpose of this letter was to clarify and call the Galatians back to the true gospel of Christ.

The Galatians had been freed through Christ from idolatry and paganism.

Faith in Jesus had given them liberty and now certain ones were trying to get them to trust in a religion (in religious festivals and rituals that were only a shadow of the Good News through Christ) and not God or what Christ did for them on the Cross.

So here's the summed up version of what he is saying.

There is tyrant, a dictator in your life.

- ✓ It just takes.
- ✓ It just **corrupts**.
- ✓ It is called your sinful nature
- ✓ It is called your flesh.

That dictator, that tyrant will rule your life if you let it.

But God!

Can you turn to your neighbor and say “**But God.**”

But God did something to set you free from the law of sin and death.

You see God loves you and He made a way for you to be set free.

He sent His Son, Jesus, to die so that you could be set free from the tyrant, the dictator over your soul.

Just as those colonists fought for their freedom from the dictator of England, God did something revolutionary.

He died for us. It is for freedom that Christ has set us free.”

Imagine a husband taking his wife out to a nice restaurant for their anniversary. Over candle light he expresses his love for his wife by quoting a list of her physical features as if reading the information from her driver's license.

- ✓ You are 5' 4" tall
- ✓ Your weight is around 100 pounds
- ✓ You were born in January
- ✓ You have brown hair

- ✓ You have brown eyes, etc.

Now imagine the same situation with the husband saying,

- ✓ You walk in beauty, like the stars that twinkle in the night sky
- ✓ Your eyes are the lamp to my soul, always drawing me in, never disappointing,
- ✓ Your beauty is beyond measure, like a wild untamed animal running free,
- ✓ I can say that I have seen a glimpse of heaven when I look into your eyes.

While the romantically challenged husband in the first situation communicated information that was accurate, he failed to communicate the depth, the magnitude, and beauty of his love for his wife.

Love is more than a list of factual information. Love is a mysterious and beautiful relationship between two people.

That is why poetry is often used to express the emotion and beautiful attraction that lovers feel toward each other.

I mention the use of poetry to introduce the idea of what Jesus is speaking about in John. Jesus does not use poetry, but He is proclaiming information that is explosive, emotional, and transformational.

The concepts of **truth**, **sin**, and **freedom** are more than fill in the blank answers from a Sunday school quiz.

In John 8:31-36 (NASB)

³¹ So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you continue in my word, then you are truly disciples of mine; ³² and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." ³³ They answered Him, "We are Abraham's descendants and have never yet been enslaved to anyone; how is it that you say, 'You will become free'?"

³⁴ Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin. ³⁵ The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son does remain forever. ³⁶ So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed. "If the Son sets you free, you are truly free."

John 8:31-36 (Amplified Bible)

³¹ "So Jesus was saying to the Jews who had believed Him, "If you abide in my word [**continually obeying my teachings and living in accordance with them, then**] you are truly my disciples. ³² And you will know the truth [**regarding salvation**], and the truth will set you free [**from the penalty of sin**]." ³³ They answered Him, "We are Abraham's descendants and have never been enslaved to anyone. What do you mean by saying, 'You will be set free'?"

³⁴ Jesus answered, "I assure you and most solemnly say to you, everyone who practices sin habitually is a slave of sin. ³⁵ Now the slave does not remain in a household forever; the son **[of the master]** does remain forever. ³⁶ So if the Son makes you free, then you are unquestionably free."

Jesus is proclaiming freedom not from individual sins or a specific act of disobedience, but He offers freedom from the nature or **condition that enslaves all people**.

The truth to which Jesus refers is more than the factual correctness that dominates so much of western Christianity.

We can quote verses about evangelism, prayer, or compassion, yet we rarely seek to extend compassion prayerfully bringing the gospel to those living in darkness.

The freedom that Jesus offers is not a political system; it is a release from the chains that enslave one's soul.

Romans 8:2 (NASB) says, "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death."

You see, we have freedom in this country not just because of some Document.

That document was very important and had wonderful words of what this Country stands for. But that's not where we get our freedom. Our freedom comes from the belief, the **faith of those who died**, who gave their lives to protect what those words stood for and those who stand for that idea today.

Your freedom from sin does not come from a religion, or a ritual, or some religious rite.

Your freedom comes from faith in Christ who gave His life for you and the faith of..

- ✓ Of giving your **life** to Him,
- ✓ Of **following** him,
- ✓ Of **believing** in His words
- ✓ That declare your **independence**
- ✓ That declare your **freedom from sin**.

Illustration

There is a story about a man who, as he was passing some elephants, suddenly stopped, confused by the fact that these huge creatures were being held by only a small rope tied to their front leg. No chains, no cages. It was obvious that the elephants could, at any time, break away from their bonds but for some reason, they did not.

He saw a trainer nearby and asked why these animals just stood there and made no attempt to get away. "Well," the trainer said, "when they are very young and much smaller we use the same size rope to tie them and, at that age, it's enough to hold them.

As they grow up, they are conditioned to believe they cannot break away. They **believe** the rope can still hold them, so they never try to break free.”

The man was amazed. These animals could at any time break free from their bonds but because they **believed** they couldn't, they were stuck right where they were.

Like the elephants, how many of us go through life hanging onto a **belief** that we cannot do something, simply because we failed at it once before?

I think every one of us can relate to this story and the feeling of having failed at something or another over the years.

Over time, we can begin to think that we are not capable of doing a particular thing and we accept this as the truth and limit ourselves to a very confined world.

We think to ourselves that I tried that before and it didn't work out, what is the point in trying it again and wasting my time, I don't want to look like a fool!

However, if we could look at all the so-called '**failures**' in our lives as just stepping stones along our path and decide to respond in a way that is positive, saying 'ah well, at least I tried, now I know what doesn't work so it makes my next attempt clearer!'

Treat it like a process of elimination, gathering momentum and staying focused on what we would like to achieve, trying this way and that until we succeed!

So, don't limit yourself to a small world, stop confining yourself to a life that is restricted, **break free** of your mental boundaries and **expand** out into this magnificent kingdom that we live in!

You see many of us, although we live in the land of the free, still feel the chains of slavery as we struggle with our many vices and entanglements.

We've got every convenience of life surrounding us.

We've got a good life.

We're living the American dream.

Compared to the rest of the world, we are rich beyond compare with more than enough. And yet... and yet are we really free?

How many are in chains

- ✓ To alcohol,
- ✓ To drugs,
- ✓ To sex,
- ✓ To pornography,

- ✓ To hate,
- ✓ To bitterness,
- ✓ To their past,
- ✓ To something they are worshipping
- ✓ To bring them happiness?

How many live in an environment or a situation that feels like a hole they can't get out of?

How many go to bed every night knowing that they are living in a self-made prison cell?

With all the things that we have, we are missing what we truly need.

Our freedoms, our blessings are found in Christ... in knowing Christ, in trusting Christ.

Then we will know the truth and the truth will set us free!

I've heard many promises by politicians and talking heads about what will make this country great again.

There's only one thing that will truly make us great again. We can have the strongest military and most stable economy. We could have the most secure borders and safest streets. We can simplify our tax plan and reach out to the poor and down trodden.

We can have the best education system and most advanced technology and innovation.

But **none** of that... none of that would make us great again.

Because what is wrong in America is not financial, or educational, or organizational, or even the lack of safety from our enemies.

Those are all symptoms of a greater problem. We have forsaken what our forefathers knew and trusted in most.

We have forgotten the God who blesses us and gives us freedom.

For time's sake I am going to cover three areas concerning "**Freedom**" we need to look at before we close, the first area is the ...

1. Freedom is a Possibility

Jesus makes one of the most amazing Inspirational claims in history.

Consider for a moment the incredible hope expressed in the promise that Jesus can set people free.

Unless you have lived a sheltered life, you have probably experienced an enslaved soul or have known loved ones who struggle to break free from ungodly chains.

These ungodly chains may be easy to identify like

- ✓ an immoral addiction,
- ✓ or the chains may be more "acceptable" like fear,
- ✓ greed,
- ✓ poverty,
- ✓ worldliness,
- ✓ doubt,
- ✓ anger,
- ✓ bitterness,
- ✓ legalism,
- ✓ racism,
- ✓ insecurity,
- ✓ despair,
- ✓ And depression.

Whatever category you classify your slavery, the result is the same a failure to experience the abundant life promised by following Christ.

To those living in bondage, **Jesus offers freedom!**

The second area concerning "Freedom" is...

2. **Freedom is spiritual**

His freedom is not a political revolution.

True freedom is not about changing your outward circumstances, (at first; that will come later)

This is a significant concept because it reveals that Jesus can free you wherever you are.

- ✓ Paul while he was on the road to Damascus persecuting Christians.
- ✓ The prodigal son while he was in a pig pen.
- ✓ Peter while he was in a boat fishing.
- ✓ One woman was drawing water from a well.
- ✓ Another woman found freedom when caught in adultery.
- ✓ A thief was on a cross of execution when Jesus set his soul free!

Spiritual freedom is **not dependent** upon physical circumstances that may have led or contributed to your bondage.

- ✓ Jesus can set you free in your **marriage** without causing a **divorce**.

- ✓ Jesus can set you free when you are **overdrawn** in your checkbook without making a **deposit**.
- ✓ Jesus can set you free from past or current failures without loading a U-Haul truck.

Don't misunderstand this concept to mean something it doesn't.

We may need to make, and Christ may lead us to make, some physical or circumstantial changes.

But, one of the main truths of divine freedom is Jesus is more concerned about setting your soul free than defeating the Roman Empire or some other external force in your life.

The last area concerning this “freedom” is

3. **Freedom is Purposeful**

Jesus describes the freedom He offers resulting from abiding in His truth.

Freedom is not a lack of restraint that allows one to fulfill any selfish desire, but genuine freedom takes place in the arena or stadium of divine truth.

As we abide in Christ we are released from the **chains of the world** and released to **be all** that God created us to be.

Consider playing an instrument like the piano.

Who is free the novice or child who has never taken a lesson but freely bangs on the piano keys, or the person who has taken lessons, reads music, and creates beautiful even worshipful sounds with the same piano?

Both have some freedom however, the skilled musician is free to play the instrument as it was designed.

We were created to walk in fellowship with almighty God, however, sin hinders that relationship by **enslaving us** in a separated life from God.

Christ is the only one who can set us free to enjoy the life as a child of God instead of living as a slave of the world.

So as we Celebrate this Independence Day, make it a day of Spiritual Independence.

Break free from the bondage of Slavery and walk in the Newness of Life that only Christ offers.

Let Us Pray!