

## **“Putting Our Liberty at Risk”**

I just spoke with a pastor who was about to take a two-month temporary duty assignment overseas as a USAF reservist. Being an Air Force guy myself, we shared stories. A few days later, I received a surprise call from an old military buddy who served with me when I was in the service in the early seventies. More stories unfolded. Even though we are a little past the adoption of the Declaration of Independence in 1776, its meaning still rings loudly in my ears. Why is this anniversary of 242 years of freedom so important?

“Risking our independence!” Tell that to the family of Cpl. Joseph Maciel, who was just killed by an “apparent insider attack” while serving on an Afghan military facility. The Pentagon said Maciel was part of Operation Freedom’s Sentinel, which conducts counterterrorism missions targeting terrorist groups like al Qaeda and the local ISIS affiliate in Afghanistan. Let’s just come out and say it, “Cpl. Joseph Maciel risked everything for our liberty as a nation.” I remember walking through Arlington National Cemetery in Washington D.C. and I saw these signs posted everywhere, “Freedom is not cheap!” All of us want to be free, need to be free, ought to be free. But wait, does God really say it is OK to be free? You decide.

Paul said in Galatians 5:1, 13-14, *“It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery. You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love. The entire law is summed up in a single command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.””*

Jesus Himself said in John 8:32, 36, *“. . . and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free . . . So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.”*

Paul also said in 2 Corinthians 3:17, *“Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.”*

There is more, much more. In fact, there is an entire letter in the New Testament devoted to this one subject. It is Galatians. A book nicknamed the “magna carta of Christian liberty.” Liberty is a great word, but it is associated with a challenge. Liberty can be abused. We see it every day when we turn on the news and witness unrest from Americans. I mean, is it really safe to teach Christians that they are free? Is it risky to promote liberty (living by grace) and being free to become who we really are? No, it is not safe! And yes, it is risky!

What am I trying to say? Our liberty in Christ is abused when we play it safe. That is one thing that the Drill Sargent pounded into our heads in Boot Camp. “Play it safe and you go home!” I changed the explicit wording for your benefit, but you get the idea. That’s what I see as I serve among our CBNC churches. Christians sometimes abuse their liberty or freedom in Christ, just to play it safe in their walk and responsibilities with God. It is, admittedly, a difficult thing to do. Promoting the freedom of the individual believer to be responsible, to make decisions, to determine choices and to push forward to accomplish the mission of “making disciples” is risky. Just because Christ has set us free doesn’t mean that we should become enslaved captives imprisoned behind legalism, opinions, traditions or personal preferences that ravage the church.

Praise God that our freedom in Christ is a gift for all to receive, but it is not cheap. It is the most priceless possession man can ever know. I challenge us to exercise our liberty in Christ by being mature and responsible to reach our communities with the life-changing Gospel. Let’s exercise our liberty to seek to accomplish the mission of making disciples that resemble the true likeness of Christ for His church. Take time today to examine any areas in your life that may be an interference and claim the truth that you are FREE in Christ. We have a world to reach!

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