TITLE: FREEDOM

TEXT: Ge. 2:16-17; Ex. 3:7-10; Gal. 5:1; 1 Pet. 1:13-16; Phil. 2:12-16; Jn. 8:31-32; 2 Co. 3:17-18

INTRODUCTION: Tomorrow, July 4th, marks the 246th anniversary of the signing of a document that we know as “the Declaration of Independence.” The day that, as a nation, we threw off the shackles of bondage to Great Britain and declared that we would be a free and independent nation.

 This morning I want to talk about the cost of Freedom.

 Freedom always comes with a price. Like everything of great value it is not obtained without cost.

 Have you ever wondered what happened to the 56 brave men who signed this document that we call our “Declaration of Independence?” What price that they were willing to pay for freedom?

 5 Signers were captured by the British, charged as traitors and tortured before they were executed.

12 had their homes ransacked and burned.

 2 lost their sons in the Revolutionary War.

 2 more had their sons captured.

 9 of the 56 fought and died from wounds or the hardships of the revolution.

 What kind of men were they? 24 were lawyers. 11 were merchants. 9 were farmers or plantation owners.

 Most were men of means and well educated. Yet they all signed this document knowing full well that the penalty would be death or something worse if captured.

 This declaration of independence that these men signed contained this pledge:

*“For the purpose of this declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor.”*

 And this they did!

 Signer Carter Baxton of Virginia, a wealthy trader, saw his ships destroyed by the British Navy. He sold his home and properties to pay his debt and died in rags.

Signer Thomas McKeam was so hounded by the British that he had to move his family constantly. He served in the Congress without pay and his family was kept in hiding. Eventually, his possessions were taken from him, and poverty overtook him.

 Vandals or British soldiers or both looted the properties of signers: Ellery, Clymer, Hall, Walton, Gwinett, Heyward, Ruttledge and Middleton.

 At the battle of Yorktown, Signer Thomas Nelson Jr. noted that British General Cornwallis had taken over the Nelson home for his headquarters. Nelson then quietly urged General Washington to open fire on his home, which was done.

 The home was destroyed and Nelson died bankrupt.

 Signer Francis Lewis had his home and properties destroyed. The enemy jailed his wife and she died in a few short months.

 Signer John Hart was driven from his wife’s bedside as she lies dying; their children fled for their lives. Hart’s fields and mill were laid waste. He later died from exhaustion and a broken heart.

Signers Norris and Livingston suffered much the same fates.

 These were not wild-eyed, rabble rousing ruffians; these were men of means. They had security and wealth but they valued liberty more.

 They had made a pledge to one another and they signed it putting their very lives on the line by doing so…

*“For the purpose of this declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor.”*

 These men who signed our Declaration of Independence may have lost their lives and their fortunes, but their sacred honor is preserved today in the hearts and minds of all freedom loving people throughout the world….

 Freedom always comes with a price….most of the time a very high price…

 The value, the worth or something will always be determined by how much someone is willing to pay for it….

EXAMPLE: I go to garage sales primarily to see if I can find a treasure to put on EBay and sell for a profit.

 Sometimes I have found something that I have got for a little money and then have sold it for a lot more.

 Sometimes I buy something and it will not sell at all.

 When it comes to things such as collectables or antiques, beauty is in the eyes of the beholder. What may be just a piece of junk to you may be worth a great deal to someone else….Value is always established by the price or the sacrifice someone is willing to pay to receive it.

Freedom’s value will be determined by how much a person wants it.

 Freedom is a central, if not thee central, theme of Scripture. The subject of freedom can be found in most every book of the bible.

 God starts the human race out on a course toward freedom….

**Genesis 2:16 - 17 (NIV) 16And the LORD God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden;**qvb://0/anchor/17**17but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.”**

 Clear back in the garden of Eden God proclaimed man to be free! **“You are free to eat from any tree in the garden…**

 This was not just a proclamation of mans freedom to eat from the trees of the garden, but it was a proclamation to man reminding him of the freedom inherent to his nature…

 It speaks to how man was created by God--As a free moral agent. Having the right to choose for himself without being restricted by God in that choice.

**16And the LORD God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden;**qvb://0/anchor/17**17but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.”**

 God advised man not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil but He didn’t restrict man from it for that would have interfered in how He created man as a free moral agent, having the full right of choice.

 God, in essence, was saying: here is the garden---here is the fruit of the garden---in it I have placed a tree that represents an alternate choice to Myself---I will call it the tree of the knowledge of good and evil---

Don’t eat from this tree and you will always live as you are living now---in My presence---in My fellowship----In communion with Me----If you ever disobey Me and eat from this tree I have told you not to eat from then you will surely die.

 How do we know that man always had the freedom of choice? Because he ended up eating from the tree that God commanded him not to eat from..

 Freedom is central in Gods creation of man. Freedom, free moral agency, is what separates us from the rest of creation. We were created by God to be free.

Freedom is an inherent part of our nature.

That is why when freedom is removed it is missed.

 When freedom is absent it is longed for.

 The Israelites were a free people….They went down into Egypt in a time of famine, grew dependant on the Egyptians and eventually lost their freedom….They eventually became slaves of Egypt.

 Were they ok with that? Did they just take that in stride after 300 years of bondage to someone else?

NO! They started to cry out to God for deliverance.

Listen to the first conversation that Moses has with God….

**Exodus 3:7 - 10 (NIV) 7The LORD said, “I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering.**qvb://0/anchor/8**8So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey—the home of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites.**qvb://0/anchor/9**9And now the cry of the Israelites has reached me, and I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them.**qvb://0/anchor/10**10So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt.”**

 What caused the people to cry out for deliverance from their slavery? The same thing that causes all men to cry out for and want deliverance from slavery..

We were created to be free. We were created by God to choose for ourselves. We were created as free moral agents…

 And anytime freedom is taken away we will not be happy about it…

Why? Because freedom is part of our creative design.

You want to get me upset then tell me that I can’t do something or can’t have something. Even if they may be things that are detrimental to me.

 Whenever I hear the words “you can’t” there is a little rebellion that pops up in my nature.

 If you are honest the same is probably true with you.

You may tell me why it may not be beneficial if I do or say a certain thing, and I may accept that, but if you tell me I can’t do or say or have a certain thing I am going to resent it…

 And there is a good reason for that. God has created me with a free will. God has created us with the right to choose for ourselves, whether what we are contemplating choosing to do is good or bad God has created us with the right to make that choice.

 My wife is one of the most congenial people I know but if I were to tell her that she couldn’t do something I can just see the sparks in her eyes start to ignite.

 As it is with all of us..

 We can say well, “I wouldn’t do it that way” or “ are you sure that is the thing to do” or “I think that would be a mistake” and it may be accepted, but whenever we try to restrict free will by saying “you can’t” we will meet it with resistance.

 Ever tell a young child, or a teenager that they couldn’t do something and then see the rebellion in their eyes..

 We may keep them from doing it but they probably aren’t going to like it.

 Sometimes, many times, as a parent we may have to restrict free will for the health and well being of our children, but we should not be surprised when it is met with resistance.

 I was a very rebellious teenager and to tell me I couldn’t do something was normally just taken as a challenge for me to find a way to do it..

( I was good at rebellion and didn’t get caught too often)

In human nature, especially sinful human nature, freedom can have its down side, but freedom is still the most precious gift of God to man.

 We need to keep in mind that freedom is a gift of God that is inherent in all of us.

 The love and pursuit of freedom is what brought the pilgrims to our shores…

 The love and pursuit of Freedom is what brought one state against another, and even in some cases, brought brother against brother and father against son, during our civil war.

 The love and pursuit of freedom, not just for ourselves, but also seeing it come true for others is why we have American lives at risk in places such as the middle east today..

Freedom is always a just cause, and in fact, freedom is what we are called to as a Christian…

 **Galatians 5:1 (NIV)**

**1It is for freedom that Christ has set us free.**

Just what is the freedom that Christ has set us free for?

The freedom that Christ has set us free for is freedom from sin, freedom from the bondage and slavery of a very cruel taskmaster.

**1It 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.**

This yoke of slavery that Paul is referring to is the yoke of the slavery of sin.

Once we come to Christ we are not to let ourselves be burdened again by sins yoke…

Sin can be a very cruel taskmaster can’t it?

Example: At the jail probably the most common link to those who are incarcerated, the most common crime that they are in jail for here in Madison county is drug related crimes.

Either dealing drugs, usually to support their own habit, or manufacturing drugs to sell and use themselves, or crimes such as theft to support their drug lifestyle…

Whatever the particular reason they may be there, the underlying cause is always the same…

They have allowed themselves to become enslaved by sin…

The main drug of choice for many today is Meth. Methamphetamine is easy to make and that makes it easier to get hold of and cheaper to buy.

But just because it is less expensive, then say, crack cocaine or heroin, doesn’t mean it is any less deadly or destructive.

 In fact, Meth, in a lot of cases, is more addicting and a harder habit to break.

Meth has the power to hook most users on the first use.

The first time a person uses Meth they get the ultimate high and from that time on they are hooked and become a chaser of that high. They chase it but they will never get it again. But the desire is so strong that they keep trying to find it. More and more of the drug is consumed but the more it is used the more they desire to find the feeling of that first time.

 They become a chaser. It often takes over their whole life. They will lie to their families and cheat on their friends and do things that they would never contemplate doing apart from their addiction.

It takes 100% control of their life. It often totally enslaves them. It quickly starts to destroy their health. Their teeth start to rot, the chemicals start to destroy their organs, as these particular chemicals filter through their bodies many will put off an odor that no amount of deodorant will subdue.

 Many that I have dealt with in the jail ministry after they have been locked up, away from the drug for 3-4 weeks, and their minds start to clear and their dependency on the drug has started to ease its hold on them, they have expressed gratitude for their incarceration…

Why? Because even though they are locked up they feel a freedom that they have not felt for a long time. They have a taste of the freedom that they once knew apart from their drug addiction.

Scripture says **1It 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.**

When we come to Christ, sorry and repentant for our sins and ask Him to come into our heart and be the Savior and Lord of our life He does just that..

The instant that we receive Jesus as our Lord and savior we are set free from the bondage and oppression of sin, in that, He instantly forgives us of all of our sins.

At the moment of our salvation we stand before God covered with the atoning blood of Jesus Christ and that blood covers over all of our sins and washes us clean from sins smear..

At that moment our sins are removed from us and we are set free from sins bondage. At that instant we are positionally righteous before God.

We have taken up the position of Jesus Christ before the Father. We stand declared righteous, not because of anything that we have done, but we stand in the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ! When we accepted Jesus into our hearts Jesus comes in and imputes His righteousness to us. That makes us positionally righteous before God.

But that is not where we are meant to stay if we are to remain in the freedom that God intends for us.

We are then expected by God to move from positional righteousness into practical righteousness.

How do we do that? How do we move on from just be positionally righteous to become practically righteous or righteous in our practices…

**1 Peter 1:13 - 16 (NIV)**

**13Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed.**qvb://0/anchor/15**14As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance.**

qvb://0/anchor/16**15But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do;**qvb://0/anchor/17**16for it is written: “Be holy, because I am holy.”****£**

Did you catch that?

**14As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance.**qvb://0/anchor/16**15But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do;**qvb://0/anchor/17**16for it is written: “Be holy, because I am holy.”**

The Apostle Paul tells us in:

**Philippians 2:12 – 16 (NIV)**

**12----continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling,**qvb://0/anchor/13**13for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.**

The phrase “work out” is an action verb. It is an action that we are to perform..

We are to work out our salvation with fear and trembling!

 How do we work out our salvation?

**14As obedient children, by** **not conforming to the evil desires we had when we lived in ignorance.**qvb://0/anchor/16**15But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do;**qvb://0/anchor/17**16for it is written: “Be holy, because I am holy.”**

We work out our salvation with fear and trembling by emulating Jesus Christ, by our desiring and striving to become more like Him. He is Holy so we are to strive to become as He is---Holy!

 And as we do this we start to move from positional righteousness to practical righteousness.

 And the true freedom for the child of God is found as we strive to become practically righteous or righteous in our practices…

**John 8:31 - 32 (NIV)**

**31To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples.**qvb://0/anchor/32**32Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”**

How does Jesus say we will be set free? By knowing the truth.

And how is it that we will know the truth?

If we hold to His teachings, If we strive to live our lives the way that Jesus lived His life--- If we put our righteousness into practice.

**32Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”**

One thing that each of us who have embraced Jesus as the Lord and Savior of our life have in common this morning is that His Spirit has come to live, to reside, inside of us the moment that we made that decision.

 **2 Corinthians 3:17 -18 (NIV) 17Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.**qvb://0/anchor/18**18And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect£ the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.**

 **17Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.**

Do you want to experience what real freedom is like-- A freedom that will transcend any situation that you may find yourself in? -- A freedom that will even transcend captivity or any human bondage? Then simply give your life to Christ and ask Him to place His spirit into your heart! For where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom! And nothing or no one will ever be able to take that freedom away from you…

Paul and Silas may have never been freer then when they were held captive in a Philippian Jail with their backs laid open by the lashes of a Roman whip!

They may have been chained to a wall and in severe pain but they were still free to sing hymns of praise to their God! The Holy Spirit was still very much alive within them and where the Spirit of the Lord is there is freedom…

Freedom always comes with a cost…Most of the time a very high cost.

 The price that Jesus paid for our freedom was a very high price. He paid the cost with His very life. Jesus died on Calgary’s cross to set us free from the bondage and oppression of sin, the cruelest of this world’s taskmaster.

There is also a great price that we must pay to receive the freedom that Christ has secured for us…. We must pay the price of surrender. Of surrendering our life to the one who gave His life for us…

It is then and only then that we will experience the true freedom that God has for us to experience in this life and the life beyond this one…

Have you paid the price of freedom this morning?

Have you paid the price of surrender?

 Have you surrendered your life to Christ? Have you given Him control of your being?

If you have then you know what real freedom is. You are living it.

If you have not then just know that God wants you to experience the fullness of freedom that only comes from a life of surrender to Him….

Within the Church we use the phrase Lord and Savior a lot. We use the words Lord and Savior together as though they are one and the same thing… But the fact is they are two very different things…

 One thing God does the other thing we must do…God saves us, He becomes our Savior after we have Made Him our Lord..

 Lordship speaks of surrender--- Our surrendering control of our life to Him. Savior is the result of that action….

We surrender our life to Christ through Lordship and then Christ becomes our Savior…

And that is where real freedom is found…

Are you experiencing that freedom in your life this morning?

I want to close with some words by-**-** Henri J. M. Nouwen

*The great spiritual task facing me is to so fully trust that I belong to God that I can be free in the world--free to speak even when my words are not received; free to act even when my actions are criticized, ridiculed, or considered useless; free also to receive love from people and to be grateful for all the signs of God's presence in the world. I am convinced that I will truly be able to love the world when I fully believe that I am loved far beyond its boundaries.*

**For God so loved---that He gave---that we might be free….**