

The Joy and Blessings that come with Freedom! July 6, 2014

July 4th is celebrated as a holiday that celebrates freedom here in America. I remember as a child looking forward to going to the Main Street in Dexter to watch the parade and was thrilled to watch soldiers march by carrying our American flag and the bands playing their horns and beating the drums as they proudly carried banners and their gold buttons glistening in the sunlight. Fireworks were the ultimate way to finish the day and Dad would find a spot every year where we could watch the colorful array of sparkles drop from the sky. As I get older, freedom means much more to me than it did as a child. I didn't understand what it would be like to be under a dictator, nor did I understand the value of our Constitution or laws of the land. I took freedom of worship and going to church for granted because I didn't know any other kind of life. I feel so differently about it today. Freedom means a great deal to me today and I am thankful for all of our forefathers who fought for us to have the freedoms that we enjoy and I am sad that so many of them are being taken away and it appears that many people are oblivious to it. I pray that America wakes up and cries out to God before it is too late.

Last week, Leroy and I picked up a newly released prisoner and took him to a designated location where he will stay until he gets his bearings under him. We have done this several times over the past few years and it never ceases to amaze me how men respond to freedom after being locked up for a period of years. We can always sense the feeling of being overwhelmed, the idea that they are free and don't have to answer to a guard, that they are free to leave the prison and ride with us in our car. They tend to talk nonstop and when we usually offer to take them to Kentucky Fried Chicken because they haven't had a meal where they could choose what they want to eat or even have a choice about how much they can eat. It is interesting to watch the guys because they are so happy to have choices and their freedom means a lot to them after having it taken away for so long.

Jesus talked a great deal about freedom. In the book of Isaiah, it reveals that Jesus came to set the captives free. See Isaiah 42:6-8. See Luke 4:18.

In John 8:31, Jesus talked to those who believed on him. He told them that if they continued in his word then they were certainly his disciples. They would know the truth and the truth would set them free. They didn't understand what Jesus meant for they thought he was talking about a natural freedom. They answered that they were Abraham's children and they had never been in bondage to anyone. Jesus continued the conversation by saying, "Verily verily, I say unto you, whosoever commits sin is the servant of sin. A servant doesn't abide in the house forever, but the son abides forever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, you shall be free indeed." He went on to explain to them that they were within hearing range of his voice that those who sought to kill him were not God's children because if they loved God, they would accept him for he came from God and Abraham rejoiced to see his day and he saw it and was glad. These people were not doing the works of Abraham. They were doing the works of Satan whose desire and goal is to destroy Jesus and to blind the people to the truth of God's word. See John 8:56. The people responded by asking Jesus how he could have seen Abraham since he wasn't

even 50 years old yet. Jesus responded by saying "Before Abraham was, I am." They took up stones to cast at him but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple going through the midst of them and passed by.

They realized that Jesus was referring to the "I Am" that God used as his name in the Old Testament when he sent Moses to approach Pharaoh to let his people go. The Israelites had been in slavery and bondage to the Egyptians for over 400 years when their cry and pleading reached God the Father. When God spoke to Moses from the burning bush and told him that he was to go to Egypt and speak to the king on his children's behalf, Moses was afraid. He asked God who was he going to say sent him to Pharaoh. God said to tell him "I Am" sent you. Tell the children of Israel that "I Am that I Am has sent you." See Exodus 3:13 & 14. I find it interesting that Jesus used this phrase when talking about freedom from the bondage of sin to the Jews of his day. They had not had a prophet for 400 years and then Jesus comes on the scene and speaks to them about being free from sin and bondage. It was the same period of time as the Israelites served the Egyptian king when God sent Moses to deliver them from Pharaoh's rulership and guided them to the land of Canaan full of milk and honey and freedom. Look at Galatians 5:14. It says that all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. But if you bite and devour one another, take heed that you be not consumed one of another. This I say then, Walk in the Spirit and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh and these are contrary to one another so that you cannot do the things that you want to do.

If you continue reading you will understand that there are sins against our own bodies, against our neighbors, and against our heavenly Father. Those who have given their lives to Christ and are walking in the light of the Lord enjoy the blessings of the fruit of the Spirit which is manifested in these qualities: Love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

What proceeds from your heart? We can be overcomers through the blood of Jesus Christ. As we yield ourselves to his will, we will learn to forgive, to be merciful, to be gentle, not easily offended and we will desire to be more and more like the Lord Jesus Christ.

The blessings of these attributes are ours to enjoy if we desire them to be a part of our lives. Some people respond to me after I have spoken to them concerning these Scriptures like this: "Well that is just the way that I am." Or "That is my personality and I am not about to change now." The Holy Spirit will change a heart! Jesus Christ will set you free from the bondage of sin that manifests itself in a heart that has a root of bitterness whereby many are defiled. Hebrews 12:12-16. It tells us to lift up the hands that hang down and make straight paths for our feet lest that which is lame is turned out of the way but rather that it would be healed.

Follow peace with all men and holiness without which no man shall see God. Look diligently toward God lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you. There are great rewards for those who have the vision of the blessings that will be in the future for the child of God.