

President's Piece for Peace

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Last month, the nation celebrated Independence Day. It is a day the U.S. citizen may give thanks for the freedoms we enjoy as a people and, particularly, the Christian is free to worship as church. Were these freedoms lost, we would most certainly notice it. We pray that does not happen but we have no biblical guarantee that the freedoms we enjoy will last.

Jesus preached one of His first sermons in His home town proclaiming that He came to give freedom to the prisoners (Luke 4:18). If Jesus came to bring freedom for the prisoner and release for the oppressed, wouldn't that mean we can expect these freedoms as long as we live? No, it does not. Jesus is making no promise concerning government or citizen freedom. His own people suffered exile, imprisonment, slavery, and bondage more than a few times throughout their history. Political and sociological freedom is not what Jesus preached nor earned.

Jesus is quoting Isaiah 61:1, and even expands on it a little so as to interpret what the text is saying. Jesus preaches "good news," which is the marvelous proclamation that God is not against you but is for you in His Son. The "good news" creates faith in the Son, who has come to endure the burden of all the Law in man's place. Faith is the eyes of the soul which were blind, but now opened to see Jesus as the Messiah come to save the people from the consequences of the sin.

The "prisoner" and the "oppressed" are every soul born of man and woman. King David said he was "sinful from the time his mother conceived him." St. Paul says we are "blind, dead, and enemies of God" by nature. To escape this, one must keep God's Law without fail and perfectly, having no blotch or wrinkle in their record. That is why being shackled to the merits of the Law is so oppressing and imprisoning. We just can't do it. Thinking, even for a moment, that I might have done as God asked to the quality He demands is a sign of self-delusion. Sin is worse than that. The Law demands perfection and we can't deliver what it demands. The result is death. There is no escape, no second chance, no excuse God the Father will accept.

Freedom is earned the old fashioned way. It is earned by perfect obedience and absolute holiness. Freedom in Christ is not about governments or politics. Freedom is not about finances and social expression. Freedom in Christ is release from the demands we cannot fulfill. Freedom is the Blood of Jesus offered up to the Father in full payment for our sins and their deadly consequences.

To release us, Jesus sends us away into deliverance. His Father looks upon us with favor, as He peers through the baptismal font and sees us holy and pure, forgiven and set free. He sees us alive in His Son by faith and no longer bound to anything but the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus does not abate the Law in this sermon of Luke 4, He fulfills it. The Law remains, and it must because of the Old Adam buried within us. The Law kills and it is supposed to. It lays us down in the dust so that we have nowhere to look and no hope to count on except in Jesus Christ the Son of the Living God. That kind of freedom will never be taken away. It is ours now no matter what government is over us. That kind of freedom is eternal and guaranteed by the Blood of the Lamb. Independence from Satan means dependence on Christ. We celebrate in the Church this most blessed and joyous freedom.



President Saunders