

## INDEPENDENCE - 2015

(By: Emerson Blythe)

THIS 4th OF JULY--INDEPENDENCE DAY--MARKS THE 239th ANNIVERSARY OF THE AMERICAN COLONIES BREAKING TIES WITH GREAT BRITAIN.

After that time, they were free from domination by the King of England; they were on their own.

This was the beginning of what we refer to as American Freedom.

Freedom is a weird term. Absolute freedom is not freedom at all... it is tyranny. With no rules to govern people's behavior there is but confusion.

Paul said, 1Co 10:23 "All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not. 24 Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth. (Or, Well Being)."

In the beginning of the United States, a basic skeleton of laws were drawn up to regulate this newfound freedom. The Pilgrims no doubt would have been appalled at the complex web of rules and regulations we have today.

New laws are constantly being passed to govern our freedom. Many people are becoming increasingly concerned with the question of how long our freedom will be "freedom" when we are shackled by an increasing number of regulations.

Many times, people themselves are to blame for the myriad of laws that shackle their freedom. We do not exercise proper self-restraint, which in turn grieves our neighbor, which in turn results in more rules and regulations being passed.

The late commentator Paul Harvey used to say: "Self Government without Self Discipline won't work." When you stop to think about it, you realize how true that is!

I think there is a Marked Parallel between:

- Our American Freedom
- The freedom of the Children of Israel of old
- And our Christian Freedom.

About 11 years after the Declaration of Independence, Alexander Tyler, a Scottish history professor at the University of Edinburgh, is said to have commented: "A democracy is always temporary in nature; it simply cannot exist as a permanent form of government." "The average age of the world's greatest civilizations from the beginning of history, has been about 200 years."

During those 200 years, those nations always progressed through the following sequence:

1. from bondage to spiritual faith;
2. from spiritual faith to great courage;
3. from courage to liberty;
4. from liberty to abundance;
5. from abundance to complacency;
6. from complacency to apathy;
7. from apathy to dependence;
8. from dependence back into bondage.

The Apostle Paul of old said, "**where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.**" (2 Cor. 3:17) So it would stand to reason that the more we depart from the Spirit of the Lord, the less Liberty we have!

THE EXAMPLE OF THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL IN THE OLD TESTAMENT IS A GREAT EXAMPLE OF SHORT-LIVED FREEDOM AND RECURRING BONDAGE.

God would call the Children of Israel to follow Him and be faithful to Him. He would bless them with prosperity, peace and liberty. Then before you would know it, they would become conceited, or be led away with sin, and God would remove His protection, and back into captivity, as slaves, they would go. There were captivities in Assyria, in Babylon and in Egypt. They wanted a King, and because of their determination, God, against His will, let them have a king. And they turned away from Him.

**Sin and departure from God is what caused God to deprive them of their liberty and bring them into captivity.** Isa 5:11 "Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink; that continue until night, till wine inflame them! 12 And the harp, and the viol, the tabret, and pipe, and wine, are in their feasts: but they regard not the work of the LORD, neither consider the operation of his hands. 13 ***Therefore my people are gone into captivity, (or, Bondage)*** because they have no knowledge: and their honourable men are famished, and their multitude dried up with thirst."

Eze 39:23 "And the heathen shall know that ***the house of Israel went into captivity for their iniquity***: because they ***trespassed against me***, therefore hid I my face from them, and gave them into the hand of their enemies: so fell they all by the sword. 24 According to their ***uncleanness*** and according to their ***transgressions*** have I done unto them, and hid my face from them."

AND IN THE NEW TESTAMENT, IN THE CHRISTIAN ERA, WE, TOO, ARE WARNED AGAINST LOSING OUR FREEDOM WE HAVE IN CHRIST.

Christianity is a way of great spiritual freedom. Lu 4:16 (Of Jesus:) "And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read. 17 And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, 18

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at **liberty** them that are bruised, 19 To preach the acceptable year of the Lord."

Joh 8:31 "Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; 32 And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

Joh 8:36 "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."

Heb 2:14 "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; 15 And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."

A WARNING: Ga 5:1 "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage."

Ga 5:13 "For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another."

1Pe 2:15 "For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: 16 As free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God."

AND... BY THE WAY... THERE ARE ALWAYS THOSE WHO ARE OUT TO BRING INTO SHACKLES AND SERVITUDE THOSE WHO ARE FREE IN CHRIST: Ga 2:4 "And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage..." There are those who go through the Bible with a fine-tooth comb, trying to turn every incident into another "rule" or "regulation" for the church. Many are troubled at the evolution of the Lord's church in recent times and view it as a departure from the faith. In some cases, it is. In others it is only a departure from man-made regulations... which (I think) would seem to be good.

BUT WHAT ARE SOME OF THE THINGS THAT TAKE AWAY OUR FREEDOM?

### **1. A LACK OF LOVE AND CIVILITY**

Ro 13:8 "Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. 9 For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. 10 Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law."

1Co 13:4 "Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not

puffed up; 5 does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; 6 does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; 7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things." (nkjv)

WITHOUT LOVE AND CIVILITY, THERE CAN NEVER BE ENOUGH LAWS ON THE BOOKS, NOR ENOUGH OFFICERS ON THE BEATS, TO MAKE PEOPLE TREAT THEIR NEIGHBORS RIGHT!

## **2. UNBELIEF CHALLENGES FREEDOM.**

**Psa. 14:1: "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good."** Notice how corruption, mis-conduct and evil follows a lack of faith! They say there is no God; they become corrupt; they do abominable works.

Take away from a generation their faith in God, and you have undermined all their moorings. No God = no Creator. No Creator = no purpose and no accountability. No accountability = no restraint. No restraint = tyranny. (And there you have a major portion of our modern society's problems.)

## **3. IGNORANCE CHALLENGES FREEDOM.**

Remember, Jesus said, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

Pr 29:18 "**Where there is no vision, the people perish:** but he that keepeth the law, happy is he."

Ho 4:6 (God:) "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being priest for Me; Because you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children. 7 "The more they increased, The more they sinned against Me; I will change their glory into shame. 8 They eat up the sin of My people; They set their heart on their iniquity. 9 And it shall be: like people, like priest. So I will punish them for their ways, And reward them for their deeds. 10 For they shall eat, but not have enough; They shall commit harlotry, but not increase; Because they have ceased obeying the LORD."

Isa 5:13 "Therefore **my people are gone into captivity,** (lost their liberty-eb) because they have no knowledge: and their honourable men are famished, and their multitude dried up with thirst."

Pr 1:30 "They would have none of my counsel And despised my every rebuke. 31 Therefore they shall eat the fruit of their own way, And be filled to the full with their own fancies. 32 For the turning away of the simple will slay them, And the complacency of fools will destroy them; 33 But whoever listens to me will dwell safely, And will be secure, without fear of evil." (nkjv)

SO IGNORANCE IS A CHALLENGE TO FREEDOM. SO MANY OF US ARE WOEFULLY IGNORANT OF THE FORCES AND TRENDS AT WORK IN OUR SOCIETY TODAY, AND WHEN IT COMES TO

RELIGION, SO MANY PEOPLE REALLY DON'T KNOW **WHY** THEY BELIEVE **WHAT** THEY BELIEVE!

#### **4 SHAMELESSNESS CHALLENGES OUR FREEDOM.**

When Peter realized his sin, he went out and *wept bitterly* (Mat. 26:75).

By contrast, people today sin and are proud of it. Sin has always been around, but when sin is accompanied by brazenness, certainly disaster is around the bend.

Ps 34:18 "The LORD [is] nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit."

Ps 51:17 "The sacrifices of God [are] a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise."

Most of what we see today is "shame for *getting caught*," not shame for *sin*!

Jer 8:6 "I listened and heard, But they do not speak aright. No man repented of his wickedness, Saying, 'What have I done?' Everyone turned to his own course, As the horse rushes into the battle. \* \* \* Jer 8:9 The wise men are ashamed, They are dismayed and taken. Behold, they have rejected the word of the LORD; So what wisdom do they have? 10 Therefore I will give their wives to others, And their fields to those who will inherit them... Jer 8:11 For they have healed the hurt of the daughter of My people slightly, Saying, 'Peace, peace!' When there is no peace. 12 ***Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? No! They were not at all ashamed, Nor did they know how to blush.*** Therefore they shall fall among those who fall; In the time of their punishment They shall be cast down," says the LORD."

#### **5. (FINALLY) AFFLUENCY CHALLENGES OUR FREEDOM.**

Affluency breeds pride and a feeling of self sufficiency, which is detrimental to our liberty. We all know that (as Pro 16:18 says,) "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall."

De 8:10 "When you have eaten and are full, then you shall bless the LORD your God for the good land which He has given you. 11 Beware that you do not forget the LORD your God by not keeping His commandments, His judgments, and His statutes which I command you today, 12 lest-when you have eaten and are full, and have built beautiful houses and dwell in them; 13 and when your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and your gold are multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied; 14 when your heart is lifted up, and you forget the LORD your God... De 8:17 then you say in your heart, 'My power and the might of my hand have gained me this wealth.' 18 And you shall remember the LORD your God, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth..."

**(CONCLUSION) WHETHER IT BE OUR NATIONAL LIBERTY THAT WE CELEBRATE ON THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE SIGNING OF THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE, OR WHETHER IT BE**

**OUR SPIRITUAL LIBERTY THAT WE HAVE BECAUSE WE HAVE BEEN MADE FREE IN CHRIST, IT IS BEFITTING TO HONOR AND CHERISH THAT LIBERTY... AND TO BE ON GUARD AGAINST THOSE THINGS THAT WOULD THREATEN IT. AS LEV. 25:10 SAYS, "proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof..."**

**BUT MOST IMPORTANT OF ALL IS OUR SPIRITUAL LIBERTY. 1Co 7:22 "For he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord's freeman..."**

**Joh 8:34 "Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. 35 And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever. 36 If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."**

**Ro 6:22 "But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life."**

**HAVE YOU BEEN SET FREE FROM THE BONDAGE OF SIN, GUILT AND DEATH BY THE BLOOD OF CHRIST?**

**Ac 22:16 "And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord." (nkjv)**