

For Freedom

By: Stephanie Loomis

"Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom"
(1 Corinthians 3:17)

Two major wars define the United States. World Wars defined the U.S. role in world affairs, but domestic conflicts outline American identity. Both wars fought for freedom and this summer we can celebrate both victories, unified as believers in Jesus, made in the image of Almighty God.



On April 19, 1775, the "shot heard 'round the world" signaled the beginning of a revolution. Colonists who had fled England had already denounced taxation without representation, British military occupation, and restrictions on trade between the Americans and other countries. The British government determined to put down the rebellion with force but with each skirmish and demand by British soldiers for colonists to provide housing, hostility toward England grew. The Declaration of Independence, signed on July 4, 1776, was the fledgling nation's first formal statement, officially declaring the United States of America a sovereign nation. The final words of the preamble contain ideals worth pursuing:

“We hold these truths to be self-evident; that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness; that to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.”



Even as the colonists secured independence, people from Africa and the Caribbean continued to be enslaved, especially in the South. Southern states didn't trust the North, while Northerners considered Southerners lazy. Arguments over state sovereignty and "manifest destiny" combined with slavery led to a war that cost more than any other in both resources and human lives. The words penned by Jefferson in 1776 were ignored, and inequality morphed into inhumanity in a practice of horror and evil. Both the North and the South contributed to the enslavement of others, if not in actual practice, then by "returning" those who escaped to find freedom. Between 1861 and 1865, the United States divided and fought, not against a foreign oppressor, but within its borders. In the middle of the war, President Abraham Lincoln delivered his Emancipation Proclamation that officially freed all the enslaved people in the Confederate States. It took two and a half years for word of freedom to reach the last stronghold, as federal troops entered Galveston, TX on June 19, 1865. By the end of 1865, the 13th Amendment to the Constitution permanently outlawed slavery and involuntary servitude across the entire nation.

Ultimately, both wars were fought for freedom: the Revolutionary War for freedom from tyranny, and the Civil War for freedom from oppression. While the laws in the United States clearly reflect that all people are created equal, freedom is incomplete without acknowledging the Ultimate Source of true freedom: the grace, mercy, and love of the Creator through Jesus.

Without Christ, no human is truly free because we are each enslaved by the sin that is our nature. No one is righteous. No one can stand before a holy God. Paul made it clear to his Roman readers that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Romans 3:23-24). By Jesus, we are made free from the tyranny of the devil. By Jesus, we are made free to share the news of salvation with the oppressed world, from our neighbors next door to the most isolated tribes.

Freedom is costly. More than 25,000 men died fighting in the Revolutionary War. More than 618,000 men died during the Civil War (about the same number as the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812, the Mexican War, the Spanish-American War, both World Wars, and the Korean War COMBINED). However, our freedom from the consequences of sin costs us nothing because Jesus set aside his divine power and glory, took the form of a servant, and became one of us so that he, himself, might serve the penalty of death on our behalf (Philippians 2).

We can be truly free because Jesus lived, died, and resurrected before ascending to his rightful place. We can gather together as sisters because Jesus paid it all, and all to him we owe. When we confess Jesus as Lord, we unite in our praise to the glory of God the Father.

Reflect:

- What does freedom mean to you?
- Are there ways you might celebrate both Juneteenth and Independence Day as days to share your freedom in Christ?

Dig a little deeper:

- Read Psalms 14 and 53. What do these passages tell you about human nature?
- Read John 8:31-47, Romans 3:21-26, and Romans 6. What hope do these passages offer to all humans?

Prayer: *Lord help me speak up to celebrate freedom this summer. Grant me opportunities to share the freedom I have in Christ!*

REFERENCES

English Standard Version Bible (2008) Crossway Bibles.

[Revolutionary War - Timeline, Facts & Battles | HISTORY](#)

[Declaration of Independence - Signed, Writer, Date | HISTORY](#)

[Civil War - Causes, Dates & Battles | HISTORY](#)

[Emancipation Proclamation - Definition, Dates & Summary | HISTORY](#)

[Drew Gilpin Faust. "Death and Dying."](#)