

W E E K L Y M E D I T A T I O N

Independence Day: July 4

Americans view the Fourth of July as a celebration of freedom from tyranny and oppression. Those who pause to reflect on the meaning of this day will be especially grateful that our hard-won liberties allow us to try to live our lives according to our sense of what is good and right.

Although the holiday is not found on the church calendar, the themes of spiritual freedom and liberty are clearly at the center of the Gospel and Christian self-understanding. According to the 'big picture' of the bible, we find ourselves within the story of an intense spiritual struggle, a struggle ultimately resolved in Christ but played out in our lives every single day: a tyrannical king - the devil; a cruel government - the powers of this fallen world; an overwhelming tax burden - our sins and fallen passions - and ruthless tax collectors - death.

In history and political theory, freedom from bondage has sometimes meant revolution. In spiritual terms, our freedom from bondage to 'the world, the flesh, and the devil' always means repentance. Repentance is a revolution of mind and heart, a repudiation of the illegitimate claims the Adversary, the refusal to accept the rule of death and the self-centeredness that leads to eternal death. Repentance allows us to gain and participate in the freedom won for us by Christ.

The Lord says: "If the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed" (John 8:36). The Apostle Paul says: "For freedom Christ has set us free" (Galatians 5:1), but he goes on to insist: "stand fast therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery". The Apostle Peter warns: "Live as free men, yet without using your freedom as a pretext for evil; but live as servants of God" (1Pet.2:16). The paradox of true spiritual freedom is, for believers, that it is only truly free to the degree that it freely, joyfully, earnestly accepts the liberating lordship of Christ.

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