

Citizenship Has It's Privileges

- *John 6:37-40*

- **The United States of America is without a doubt the greatest country on this earth & the freedoms that we have today we owe to our forefathers who sought to establish a land where liberty & justice would rule.**

- This weekend, we have celebrated our nation's independence which was established on July 4, 1776. This document made it possible for us to be set free from the tyranny of Britain as we stepped out in faith "in order to form a more perfect union".
- Yet it was later on in 1791 as the Constitution was amended to detail out the Bill of Rights of every man & woman, that the freedoms of these United States became evident.

1. FREEDOM OF RELIGION

- a. *Freedom of religion* guarantees to all Americans the right to practice any religion they choose, or to practice no religion at all.

2. FREEDOM OF SPEECH

- a. This freedom guarantees that Americans are free to express their thoughts and ideas about anything.

3. FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

- a. The freedom to express your ideas and opinions in writing in the form of newspapers, books, magazines, or any other printed or written form.

4. FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

- a. Another priceless freedom guaranteed by the First Amendment is *freedom of assembly*, or freedom to hold meetings.

5. FREEDOM OF PETITION

- a. The *freedom of petition* is the right to ask your government to do something or to refrain from doing something.

6. THE RIGHT TO BEAR ARMS

- a. The Second Amendment to the Constitution guarantees Americans the *right to bear arms*.

7. "NO-QUARTERING" RIGHT

- a. The Third Amendment states, "No soldier shall, in times of peace, be quartered in any house. . . ." Under British rule, the colonists sometimes had to feed and house British soldiers against their will. As a result, Americans wanted this practice forbidden under the Bill of Rights.

8. THE RIGHT TO EQUAL JUSTICE

- a. The Bill of Rights contains many rights that are guaranteed to persons accused of a crime & was instituted to help guarantee equal justice for all Americans.
 - i. A person must be indicted, or formally accused of a crime, by a group of citizens called a "grand jury" before he can be brought into court for trial.
 - ii. A person accused of a crime is guaranteed the right to know what law he is accused of breaking.
 - iii. A person accused of a crime has a right to a prompt public trial by a jury of his fellow citizens.

- iv. An accused person cannot be put into prison and kept there for weeks or months while awaiting a trial. He has the right to leave jail, in most cases, if he can raise a certain sum of money, or bail, as a pledge that he will appear at his trial.
- v. An accused person has a right to a lawyer to represent him in court.
- vi. All the testimony and evidence against an accused person must be presented publicly in court.
- vii. The accused person has the right to call any witnesses to appear if their testimony will help him.
- viii. The accused person cannot be forced to testify or give evidence against himself.
- ix. If the accused person is found guilty, he cannot be given cruel or unusual punishment. If the accused person is found not guilty of a serious crime, he cannot be tried a second time for this same crime.

9. THE RIGHT TO OWN PRIVATE PROPERTY

- a. The Fifth Amendment guarantees Americans the right to own private property. No person may take away anything that we own. Nor can the government seize our land, money, or other forms of property without cause, or without paying for it. The right to own private property is one of America's basic freedoms. Our free economic system is based upon this right.

10. THE RIGHT TO ENJOY MANY OTHER FREEDOMS

- a. Freedom to live or travel anywhere in our nation
- b. Freedom to work at any job for which we can qualify
- c. Freedom to marry and raise a family
- d. Freedom to receive a free education in good public schools
- e. Freedom to join a political party, a union, and other legal groups

- **It is for these freedoms that many across our world today are striving to become U.S. Citizens.**
 - Though you may not be born in this country, if you attain U.S. citizenship, you are given the same rights & freedoms as one born in this country.
 - Yet the citizenship process is quite lengthy & takes a minimum of 10 months & up to several years to gain these freedoms.
 - In other words, just b/c a person wants to be an American, he cannot gain the freedoms of an American for at least a year.
- **As I began thinking about that, I was reminded of all the freedoms that we have as Christians, not b/c of who we are, but b/c of what Christ did for us.**
- **When we were saved, Jesus assures us that we were saved in an instant when we called upon Him in saving faith. And this morning if you have never been saved, if you will call upon Him today, you too can have this instant & free salvation.**
- **So what happens when we are saved? Some people feel different, some feel the same; yet there is something very real taking place in each of our lives.**

1. We Become A Child Of God

- John 1:12-13 – “But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”

- a. First we must believe on his name. That name is none other than the name of Jesus. His name is the key to our salvation.
 - i. When he was about to be born, the Lord sent a messenger to Joseph with the command, "Thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21).
 - ii. To believe on his name is to believe in what his name signifies; it is to believe that Jesus can save me from my sins b/c we are all in need of a Savior.
- b. The second part of this verse says we are to "receive him."
 - i. It is to "as many as received him" that he imparts new life. It is not enough to believe that Jesus is *a* Savior, not enough to believe that he is *the* Savior. He must become *my* Savior. The only way that can happen is for me to receive him.
 - ii. That step simply involves inviting Jesus, the one who saves people from their sins, to come into my heart and life as Savior and Lord, to live and to reign in my innermost being.
- c. And the Bible says when we believe & receive, God does something miraculous that only He can do ... He gives us the power to become a child of God?
 - i. He imparts new life. The Holy Spirit comes in and indwells the human spirit, bringing with him the life of God. It is God and God alone who can do this b/c v.13 says:
 - 1. It is "not of blood." Just because my parents are God's children does not make me one of God's children.
 - 2. It is *not of human desire* (1:13b). No amount of wishful thinking makes me a child of God. I might wish I were the child of a millionaire but that does not make me one.
 - 3. It is *not of human design* (1:13c). It is not "of the will of man." My parents may have me baptized as a baby, but that does not make me a child of God; that is only "the will of man." I may use all my strength of character to live a good life, perform religious duties, achieve spiritual goals, but those things will not impart new life.
 - ii. It is a new birth by the power of God.

2. We Are Given Eternal Life

a. Home in Heaven

- i. You know, we work our entire lives to earn a pension or be able to enjoy a few years of retirement.
- ii. We purchase a house, but it may take us 15, 20, or even 30 years to own it.
- iii. But the very moment we accept Jesus Christ as our Personal Savior, we have a Home in Heaven.
 - 1. Oh we may have to wait a period of time to be able to see it.
 - 2. But rest assured, your home in Heaven is even more real than your present address today. Why? Because of the promise Jesus made.
 - a. John 14:2 – "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you."
- iv. What a comfort to know that even though my home here on this earth can decay & be destroyed, there is a Heavenly home that awaits me that will last for eternity.

b. Eternally Saved

- i. This is not eternal security, this is being eternally saved. There is a big difference.
- ii. Once we accept Christ, we don't have to be concerned with Christ being able to keep His promise of eternal salvation.
 1. John 10:28-29 – “And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.”
- iii. There are endless forms of security in this life & they all have their flaws. But when Christ saves us, we are eternally saved & no one can snatch us from His hands.
- iv. History tells of a courageous Christian who was standing before one of the Roman emperors who was persecuting the church. The emperor was demanding that Christians abandon their faith, deny the Lord, and declare Caesar as Lord. But this Christian refused. So the emperor threatened, "Give up Christ, or I will banish you."
The Christian said, "You can't banish me from Christ, for He has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.' "
The emperor said, "I will confiscate all your property."
The believer replied, "My treasures are laid up in heaven. You can't touch them."
The emperor said, "I will kill you."
The Christian said, "I have been dead to the world in Christ for forty years. My life is hid with Christ in God. You can't touch it."
- v. That's how confident we sought to be in the salvation that Christ hath purchased for us.
 1. Psalm 91:7 – “A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee.”

3. We No Longer Carry The Penalty Of Sin

a. Come As A Sinner

- i. Revelation 22:17 – “And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”
- ii. Romans 10:13 – “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”
- iii. This is the beauty of Christianity. So many other religions “raise the bar” so high that many can never attain their standards.
- iv. But b/c of the sacrifice of Christ, the ground is level at the foot of the cross. And we can bring whatever past, whatever sin, whatever disappointment, and He gladly takes those sins & disappointments as His own, no questions asked.
 1. There are chains of sin that are hanging around the necks of many today; but through Christ, we can break free from the bondage of our sins.
 2. Psalm 103:10-13 – “He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us. Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him.”

3. Isaiah 44:22 – “I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee.”

b. Leave As A Saint

- i. Isaiah 1:18 – “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”
- ii. We think of the term “saint” as being perfect & never sinning. Some acquire it to good works & deeds done on this earth.
- iii. But according to scripture, the term saint signifies our standing before God.
 1. Though we have sinned, He sees us as righteous through the blood.
 2. Though we have made many mistakes, He sees us as spotless b/c of the blood.
 3. Though we have fallen time & time again, if we come to Him in repentance, He sees us as Redeemed.
- iv. We are called righteous & justified & holy, not b/c of our lives or our goodness, but b/c of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

4. We Want The World To Know

a. Andrew

- i. We don't see Andrew much in the N.T., but when we do he is a very quiet & reserved young man ... at least until he meets Jesus.
- ii. When Andrew meets Jesus, he instantly changes.
 1. John 1:41-42 – “He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus.”
- iii. Andrew loved his brother, and when he met Jesus, he wanted more than anything for this same happiness & joy to be passed on to his family.

b. Woman At The Well

- i. This lady had no intentions of meeting Jesus on this day, yet when she encountered Him, he told her more about her life than she thought anyone knew & showed her the importance of trusting in Him.
- ii. She trusted in Christ there at the well & the Bible says immediately she left her water pot to return to tell her family of what the Savior had done for her.
- iii. Because of her testimony, the Bible says that many of the Samaritans came & trusted in Jesus Christ.

c. The truth is, these stories are great & wonderful to read about; but the truth is, every one of us should desire to do the same thing when we have trusted in Christ.

➤ **It is perfectly acceptable for us to rejoice & celebrate the freedoms that we have in this country. But often times as Christians, we continue to live in bondage.**

- If you are a child of God, you have access to the throne of God. It is there where we can lay all of our concerns, our problems, & our questions at the feet of our Heavenly Father.
- And when you lay them at His feet, leave them there & claim the freedom that is found through Jesus Christ.
 - Galatians 5:1 – “Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.”

- "Free!" says Paul. You have been purchased! You are the property of the Son of God. Nobody nor anything has any right to enslave you again.
 - This is exactly what the legalists were trying to do in Paul's day. They were trying to shackle Christ's freemen with the chains of the Law with their silly man-made rules and regulations of religion.
- "Stand fast! Stand firm! Plant your feet!" It would bring to mind the Roman way of waging war.
 - When faced by wild, undisciplined enemy hordes, the Romans simply locked their shields together, planted their feet firmly on the ground, and presented to the charging enemy an iron wall of steel and resolution.
 - That is the kind of stand that we must take against error and the lies of Satan about our sin & our past.
- Paul then goes on to talk about the yoke in the latter part of the verse. The image of the yoke is not difficult to understand. It usually represents slavery, service, and control by someone else over your life.
 - When God delivered Israel from Egyptian servitude, it was the breaking of a yoke (Lev. 26:13).
 - The farmer uses the yoke to control and guide his oxen, because they would not willingly serve if they were free.
 - When the believers in Galatia trusted Christ, they lost the yoke of servitude to sin and put on the yoke of Christ (Matt. 11:28-30).
 - The yoke of religion is hard, and the burdens heavy; Christ's yoke is "easy" and His burden is "light."
 - The yoke of Christ *frees* us to fulfill His will, while the yoke of the Law *enslaves* us.
 - The unsaved person wears a yoke of sin (Lam. 1:14); the religious legalist wears the yoke of bondage (Gal. 5:1); but the Christian who depends on God's grace wears the liberating yoke of Christ.
- It is Christ who has made us free from the bondage of the Law. He freed us from the curse of the Law by dying for us on that old rugged cross.
 - As a believer in Christ, we are no longer under Law; we are now under grace.
 - Romans 6:14 – "For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace."
 - This does not mean that we are outlaws and rebels. It simply means that we no longer need the *external* force of Law to keep us in God's will, because we have the *internal* leading of the Holy Spirit of God.
 - Romans 8:1-4 – "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That

the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”

- Christ died to set us free, not to make us slaves. To go back to Law is to become entangled in a maze of "do's and don'ts"; that's NOT Christianity.
- Warren Weirsbe said, “there are some believers who are frightened by the liberty they have in God's grace; so they seek out a fellowship that is legalistic and dictatorial, where they can let others make their decisions for them. This is comparable to an adult climbing back into the crib.”
- Christian liberty is about a humble, fulfilling, obedient life in following after Christ.