

Sermon for July 5, 2026
Independence Day Weekend
"What Do We Do With Our Freedom?"

Galatians 5:1, 13-25

Freedom! It's what people are celebrating this week. 250 years ago on the 4th of July 1776 the 13 colonies declared their independence and became free from England. It was a new union dedicated to the idea that each human being had a right to be free. The Declaration of Independence said, "all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." One of our country's earliest acts was to institute a Bill of Rights, which enumerated some of these rights like freedom of religion, of speech, and of assembly.

Throughout the history of the United States, most of our conflicts have been about freedom. Even the greatest of our conflicts the Civil War was about freedom. Then there was workers' rights, women's suffrage, and civil rights. We have not always lived up to these ideals, but where we fail these founding words call us to account.

So, we celebrate that freedom this weekend, but what is freedom? What do we do with it? We have been given great freedoms by God. Our creator has given us unalienable rights. We need to ask ourselves how do we use the freedom we have.

What is freedom? To the founders of the United States, it was freedom from the King of England. It was about "government of the people, by the people, and for the people." It was about being free to worship or not worship God as one saw fit. It was about being free from excessive taxation. It was about being able to say what you think without fear of being thrown in jail.

For the most part we experience those freedoms in The United States, but are we truly free? Are people stuck in a cycle of poverty really free? Are people ensnared by materialism or prejudice really free? Are fearful people who lock the world out either physically or emotionally really free?

Often, we are not really free. We Americans may be more free than in some other nations, but we are often enslaved. We are sometimes slaves to our prosperity. We can be slaves to our desires, or to our fears. As a human race, we are all slaves to sin and death!

Perhaps it would help to look at what the Bible says about freedom. It says, "For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love be servants of one another. For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'" (Galatians 5:13-14) According to the Bible, freedom is not license to do what one will. It is an opportunity to serve God. The exercise of true freedom is not found in doing your own thing, but in serving your neighbor in love.

This Christian understanding that freedom is servanthood is the exact opposite of the world's understanding. According to the world, one is free who can

go wherever they want and do whatever they want. In reality such a person is actually enslaved to his or her own selfishness. Their wants control them and tell them where to go and what to do. They are alienated from the fellow human being by their lack of love, and they are alienated from God by their unjust attitudes and actions.

The Bible says, "Live by the Spirit, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh." (Galatians 5:16) Also, "if you are led by the Spirit you are not subject to the law." (Galatians 5:18) The only way to be free of selfishness is to allow the Spirit of God to free you. If anyone is enslaved to sin only God in Jesus Christ can make him or her truly free. No government, or constitution, or bill of rights can do that, only God!

In short, freedom should be an opportunity to serve others not ourselves. So, how should we use our freedom? Paul described those who used their freedom for serving self. He wrote, "Now the works of the flesh are plain: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension, party spirit, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and the like. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." (Galatians 5:19-21)

This is not a way of freedom it is a way of slavery to sin and death, but it seems to describe the people of our age. How much envy, strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension, factions do we see in our society? Also, if you look close you may see a little of yourself in it too.

Those who use their freedom for serving others are described this way: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such there is no law." (Galatians 5:22-23) He goes on, "And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit." (Galatians 5:24-25)

Freedom! It is what we celebrate this weekend. As citizens of the United States of America, you have freedoms that others only dream of. The freedom to go where you want to do what you want. We take for granted the ability to just pick up and go wherever we wish on our vacations and even the economic ability to take a vacation.

What are you doing with your freedom? Are you serving others or serving yourself? Can you see selfishness and strife in your life? When you hear Paul list of the works of the flesh do you see yourself in them? If you can, then you are serving yourself. If you are serving yourself then you really aren't free. You are a slave to your selfishness.

Do you believe in freedom? Then seek to be truly free. Sacrifice your wants and desires in love to others. Seek to live the fruits of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. If you want to be free to do these things then ask Jesus to set you free, not so that you can indulge yourself, but so you can live God's love for others. Declare your

independence from sin and death.