



# the Source

*Let anyone who is thirsty come to me...*

## Freedom in Christ

As we celebrate our nation's birthday and our independence, we naturally thank God for our freedom and the many gifts God has given to us as citizens of this great nation. Freedom is an essential part of God's plan for all people of all nations, and our calling as Christians is to share this message with the lost. The Apostle Paul addresses God's idea of freedom in Galatians 5:1, 13-14.

In this scripture, Paul notes that Christ died to set us free from sin and from the burdensome laws and rigid requirements of the Jewish faith. But this freedom doesn't mean we are free to pursue selfish desires: that would in fact lead us into slavery—slavery to sin. No, freedom in Christ means we are able to accomplish the impossible task of putting away selfish desires and instead focusing on others.

Paul emphasizes the freedom to serve as each Christian chooses to do right and to glorify God through service to others. Under our new covenant with God through belief in Christ, we are commanded to love others as ourselves. Paul says this command sums up the entire law. It seems simple. Yet this is possible only through dependence on Christ and the Holy Spirit to convict us when our motivation becomes selfish. When we criticize or find fault in others, we are not letting love guide our actions. When we think of ourselves as better than others, we are not loving as Christ would love.

Each day we have the opportunity to embrace this freedom through Christ who guides our hearts to love and serve others. Let us all give thanks this Independence Day that such a love has come to us.

*Paula Holmes, First Church member*

## A Family Affair

Read Galatians 5:1, 13-15 together. The book of Galatians was written by the apostle Paul to a church in Galatia. There was a great deal of disagreement within this church about whether the new Christians had to follow every detail of the Jewish law. Paul said Christ has set them free (from the Law). Does the idea of freedom mean you can do whatever you want? Paul warned the church about using the freedom to focus on self. Instead, he encouraged the church to focus on others: *"you shall love your neighbor as yourself."* Paul said the whole law can be summed up in this one commandment.

As a family, discuss, *"who is your neighbor?"* The dictionary defines *neighbor* as a person who lives near another. It also defines *neighbor* as a fellow human being. Discuss which definition you think the Bible uses in this commandment. Share ideas for loving your neighbor, both those who live next door and those you may not even know. Did you meet anyone new at camp or VBS this summer? How can you extend love to them?

*Dear God, thank you for your Word, the Bible, and all it can teach us. Help us to love all of our neighbors each and every day. Amen.*

*— Jennifer Hall, Director of Children's Ministry*

## Monday: Galatians 5:1, 13-14

"It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery. You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love. The entire law is summed up in a single command: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"

- What is freedom?
- How can we avoid slipping into sin like gossip or fault-finding?

## Tuesday: Psalm 24

The Psalms are a collection of poetry that express praise, worship and confession to God. In Psalm 24, the psalmist recognizes God as the creator and sustainer of all. He addresses the importance of honesty in all our relationships, especially our relationship with God. The Lord of Hosts identified in the psalm is the commander of heaven's armies or the Messiah himself. Scholars identify this psalm as the battle cry of the church as it looks forward to Christ's return.

- Spend time today praising God for the blessings of America!

## Wednesday: I Corinthians 8:9-13, 10:23-24

Here Paul uses an example of food to illustrate the point that we as Christians have a responsibility to set a good example for others in the faith. Drinking alcohol might be a clearer example today. What one person can handle maturely and responsibly, another perhaps younger person might abuse unintentionally. Paul is saying that we should think about others as we live our lives publicly.

- Discuss with your family the importance of setting a good example for others.

## Thursday: Exodus 20:1-17; Matthew 22:37-40

In the Matthew scripture, Jesus was not overlooking the Ten Commandments of the Exodus passage. Instead, he encapsulated the spirit of the commandments into one over-arching rule which gives us a positive instruction on how to live rather than a list of negative don't's.

- Discuss with your family how the Ten Commandments are included in the two given by Jesus.

## Friday: Romans 6:11-14, 8:12-14

Through belief in Jesus Christ we can receive the Holy Spirit who convicts us of our sinful ways and guides us into right living. Without the Holy Spirit we naturally fall into sin. But if we ask God to guide our daily activities and we keep our focus on Christ and His purpose for our lives, we can overcome the temptations of sin.

- What does it mean to be dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus?
- What does it mean that we are living in the Age of Grace?

**Prayer:** Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for the blessings of freedom and opportunity that we enjoy in America. Help us to be the change that this world needs by sharing the love of Christ to all with whom we come in contact. We ask these things in the name of Christ. Amen.