



July 4, 2024

"Happy Dependence Day!"

Romans 7:15-25

The Reverend Carl W. Bassett

Happy 4th of July! *"We hold these Truths to be self-evident, that 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."* Do you know where that strong statement comes from? Hopefully, many will recognize those life changing words as the Preamble in the **"The Declaration of Independence"** set forth by our founding fathers in Congress on **July 4, 1776**. It was a declaration of freedom from the rule of King George III of Great Britain gained by the blood and suffering of our forefathers. It was a great day in America's history, and because of those first **Patriots'** sacrifice, we still, by the grace of Almighty God, are able to live in one of the greatest nations in the world.

Yet while we live in a nation with more freedoms than most, we are nowhere even close to being truly free people. In truth, our freedom is threatened by supporters of a satanic crew all over the world. Worse yet, we **"war"** with our fellow citizens of "America the Beautiful" over racism, hatred, distrust, and unhealthy, divisive politics! However, in a more destructive and personal way, we are fighting a more deadly war with

ourselves! **That war is with the devil and sin!** In fact, we are **POWS—Prisoners of War! Prisoners of Sin**, and the verdict for all prisoners of sin is **Death!** **Happy 4th of July??**

Maybe some would think I'm being a little melodramatic! Well, listen to the inspired, error-free words of God, written by His messenger Paul, over 2000 years ago. His ancient message was not just for the folks living in Rome then, but also for us today in 2024: *"I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. Now if I do what I do not want, I agree that the law is good. But in fact, it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me. For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me. So I find it to be a law that when I want to do what is good, evil lies close at hand. For I delight in the law of God in my inmost self, but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind, making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?"* **(Romans 7:15-24)**

Sure sounds like a prisoner of sin to me. So, if we are prisoners, convicted to die, how can we truly live a peaceful and independent life? Let's put it another way. There are two basic symptoms of being a **POW to sin**. One is that we don't do what we want. For example ... I know that God commands me to be in His Holy, timeless Word regularly. I know that God wants me to pray, and not just pray for 15 seconds, but be a person of prayer, in prayer, like Jesus. I know that God wants me to love other people. I know I'm supposed to forgive and be patient. I know I'm supposed to be the kindest person on the block ... But I also know I don't do these things flawlessly. What's wrong with me? Worse yet we suffer with another fatal characteristic of being a **POW to sin**: not only do we

not do what we want, we do the evil that we don't want to do. I hold grudges, I judge, I lose my temper, I hoard, I talk bad about people, I ignore God's clear Word. Basically, I sin all day long, and I really don't want to.

The **sad truth** is that we are all POWS—Prisoners of War! Prisoners of Sin! And remember, the verdict for prisoners of sin is Death! Oh yes, I heartily admit and confess with Paul, I am wretched – absolutely a poor miserable sinner! But never forget the words that follow this confession: in **Romans 7:25** *“Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!”* **There is HOPE for us all!** But so many millions have never heard this message or believe it! So, let's get really personal!

Folks, if this great nation is to remain a great free nation with the unalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, we must change and repent of our sinful ways before the Almighty.

In fact, if you and I are to be released as POWS—Prisoners of War, hostages to sin - we must set forth a new declaration! It's a declaration not of independence from the king of Great Britain, but a **Declaration of DEPENDENCE upon the Creator—and His Son Jesus Christ**—only in this way can we truly experience any type of freedom. Then this could really be a **Happy 4th of July weekend!** And even more than that, we could celebrate every day with the words, **Happy Dependence Day!**

Here's the weird thing about it all. In **1776** when the Colonies declared their independence from the King, Great Britain declared all-out war trying to squash our pursuit of freedom. Yet daily when you and I declare independence from the Creator King, Jesus our Savior from sin instead declares all out forgiveness, trying to enable the pursuit of true freedom! I know it doesn't make sense, because to us it doesn't seem fair. Jesus is the opposite of you and I ... He always did the things he set

out to do and he never did the evil things he hated. He was perfect, and yet he allowed himself to be treated as a sinner, so God could call you a saint. He allowed himself to be taken a prisoner of war, so you could live in freedom. **He let his body** become a **body of death**, so that you could have a **body of eternal life**.

Mind boggling, isn't it! Instead of the firing squad pointing its weapons of execution at you, at the last minute there occurred a prisoner exchange and the weapon of death was pointed at Christ instead. He became **Your sin** and **you** became **His righteousness**. You see, Jesus Christ is the **ONLY cure** for a POW of sin – you and me! What amazing grace and love he displays for **all of us** who are so unworthy!

So, what does this mean for all of us on **July 4, 2024**? A lot! Think of all those things you should have done and did not. Think of all those things you should not have done and did. Now think of one person— Jesus ... **Now simply humbly ask for forgiveness!** And right now, at this moment know that you have already been forgiven for all the things you didn't do and the sins you did do, and your future becomes bright and hopeful—with a freedom beyond compare.

Now that doesn't mean the battle is over inside of us. There's still something wrong with you and me. Dear Friends, there will **always be something wrong** until the day we die. **But through the suffering and blood shed on that cross of Jesus some 2000 years ago, you have a freedom no one can take from you.**

Right now, as we celebrate Independence Day once again, you and I can begin to live in **Hope**; the Spirit of Christ will change your outlook, your future, not by what you have done, but by the sacrifices Jesus has made. **This is the cure for all the problems I have. This is the cure for all the problems you have ... that this whole world has!** The cure is called

grace and forgiveness—and it is the only cure for our deadly disease of sin. And only Jesus Christ can deliver this everlasting cure, for there is **“no other name under heaven by which one can be saved”** from God’s wrath!

Folks, the day is coming sooner than you think when the war inside of you will end, and on that day when we stand at death’s door, because of Christ and the saving faith He has given us, we’ll find ourselves standing at the door of true independence ... one step away from true, incredible, perfect, eternal freedom ... one step away from uttering the words, **“Free at Last, Free at Last, Thank God Almighty I’m Free at Last!”** Yes, that day will come for all of us when we stand before the Throne of the Almighty. May the Spirit of our Mighty and Awesome Heavenly Father enable us to stand firm and remain **dependent** upon the promises of God ... totally dependent **upon** the work of **Christ Jesus!**

In the precious name of Jesus and His everlasting glory, Happy 4th of July!

Happy Dependence Day!