

What God Thinks

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I saw an article earlier this week "250 Years, What Native Americans Think." I'm far more interested in what God thinks. So, we have three passages today that remind us what God has to say about freedom.

The People of Freedom

Psalm 33:12,18 Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD, The people He has chosen as His own inheritance. Behold, the eye of the LORD is on those who fear Him, On those who hope in His mercy,

We are the people of Freedom because we are the people of God. We are the people of God not because America is number one, but because as the Psalm says we have put our "hope in His mercy"

We have a sinful tendency to look for comfort and reassurance through an elevation of the group. Our nation is number one, therefore we are better. We like to think our nation is the one God has chosen. We like to think our church is the only correct church.

Although we certainly recognize the many blessings which God has showered upon us for the past 250 years, we need to be careful about falling into that mindset that America is God's chosen nation. God people are not any given nation, but rather His eyes are on all those who **"hope in His mercy."**

God's people are " **a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands,"** Revelation 7:9

But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; 1 Peter 2:9

We do not look to the group of which we are a part for confidence, rather we look to the cross of Christ. We do not boast in ourselves, our nation or our church, we boast in cross of Christ. We do not put our hope in our strength or our righteousness. We put our hope in the mercy of God, and to put our hope in Christ means to begin by confessing our sins. We are people of freedom not because we are American's but because we are forgiven through Jesus Christ.

Let us pray for forgiveness and plead for his mercy for the next 250 years

Heavenly Father, by your mercy you have sustained and blessed our land for 250 years. Yet we have increasingly ignored your grace and become bolder in our sin. Forgive our sins and if it be according to your will grant us more years of grace and blessing. Always remind us, however, that your kingdom and your people are not a nation of this world but the gathering of all those who believe in you. Teach us to lay aside earthly attachments and pride in our works that we may be your true people through faith in Christ Jesus. Teach us to put our hope in your forgiveness and always look to the cross of Christ. Amen

The Source of Freedom

John 8:34-36 NKJ 34 Jesus answered them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin. 35 "And a slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever. 36 "Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.

The source of our freedom is not the constitution or the revolutionary war, but Christ himself. Our freedom comes from Christ.

We all know the famous quote attributed to Patrick Henry, "Give me liberty or give me death." A very patriotic and stirring sentiment. Yet how much greater would the phrase be if he were referring not to freedom from a British monarch but to the true freedom that we have in Christ.

All freedom is the result of Christ's death on the cross. It is Christ alone that has set us free. The earthly freedoms which we as Americans pride ourselves in and which we have enjoyed for 250 years is a direct result of the spiritual freedom which Christ has given to us.

The gospel which had been hidden in darkness for many centuries was proclaimed again in all its glory at the time of the reformation. This proclamation of this gospel affected not only the religious thinking of people but also the civil thinking of the people.

Much of our own constitution came from the thinking of the reformers. Individual liberty, the importance of individual conscience, the insistence on the separation of church and state,

religious freedom, limited government, all these ideas and many more were the direct result of those reformers whose ideas were shaped by the proclamation of the gospel. Having been set free from spiritual tyranny they sought to proclaim that freedom.

As much as we treasure these earthly liberties, and we do treasure them, they are but pale imitations of the liberty that we have in Christ. We rejoice greatly in 250 years of civil freedom but rejoice even more in freedom from sin. We recognize that even these civil freedoms have their source in Christ who died so that we might be set free.

Let us pray for freedom -

Heavenly Father, we thank and praise you for the freedoms which you have granted us in this land that we love. Most especially we thank you for the freedom to worship you without fear of persecution, imprisonment or death. If it is according to your will continue to grant us this freedom that we may worship, you in truth. Nevertheless, humble our hearts that we may understand that the only thing that really matters is the freedom we have received in Christ. You have made us your sons through baptism and through faith. What does this world or the political situation here matter in comparison to the glory that is ours through the death of your son. Let the light of Christ's resurrection guide us every day of our lives. Into your hands we commit our times and our lives. Amen

The Service of Freedom

Galatians 5:13 For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.

The Service of Freedom. Freedom does not mean doing whatever I want. It means that because I am no longer bound by sin, I am free to serve my God and my neighbor.

When we are children, we can't wait till we are adults and we can do what we want. When we become adults, we quickly realize we are more tightly bound by our responsibilities than we were as children. Even though we had to do what our parents told us, we had far fewer responsibilities as children.

Our founding fathers believed and taught that every liberty required responsibility. Freedom was not a license to do whatever you want, instead each liberty required a corresponding responsibility. Benjamin Franklin famously noted that America is "a republic, if you can keep it". He understood that those who do not take seriously the responsibility of freedom will lose it. The right to vote requires a citizenship that actively participates not only in voting but in educating itself on the

reasons and choices. Religious freedom requires each individual to know and search the scriptures, or you will quickly become slaves again to wolves in sheep clothing. Civil liberties require citizens who practice self-restraint and prioritize community well-being.

Just as our civil liberties require responsibility, even more so does our freedom in Christ. As Paul writes, being free from sin does not mean indulging our lusts, or else we become slaves again. The freedom we have in Christ is not an opportunity to indulge the flesh, to do whatever we want, but the chance to serve one another. In the Old Testament when believers were bound by ceremonial law. They spent a great deal of their time focused on fulfilling the demands of the law. Knowing we are forgiven through Jesus we can spend less time worrying about every little detail of the law and instead serving one another. Instead of worrying about what do I have to do to please God, we can think about what can I do to help my neighbor.

Let us pray for service -

Heavenly Father, you have sent your only begotten son, that he might pay the price of our sin and through his death we are set free from a debt that we could never repay. The price of our freedom was not cheap, but thanks be to Jesus who paid what we could not. Teach our hearts through your word that we may not return to the slavery of sin but set aside the sin which so easily ensnares us and trusting in your forgiveness we might be salt and light on this earth. Teach us how to speak and act towards one another in true Christian love and fellowship. Teach us how to serve others as you served us. Forgive us when we fail and help us to do better tomorrow. Through Jesus Christ we pray, AMEN

We thank God for the liberty of our land, but we thank him most of all for liberty from sin. Amen