

A Joyful Church in a Suffering World - 1 Peter 1:3-9

On this Memorial Day weekend, I am grateful to be an American. I am thankful to those who have laid down their lives for our freedom! It is good and right to honor them today for their sacrifice.

But there is One whose sacrifice secured for us far more than our earthly freedoms! Jesus Christ is the source of eternal life! He laid down His life to give us a freedom that can never be taken away - secured forever!

It is this freedom, this eternal hope, that we get to live into every day by faith, & it's the reason why we worship & give our allegiance to Jesus Christ!

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" – 1 Peter 1:3

The freedom secured for us by the blood of those who gave their lives for our country is a freedom of "life, liberty & the pursuit of happiness!"

But what kind of life, liberty, and happiness can be truly found w/out experiencing the freedom found in Christ through His death & resurrection?

- We may have "life" apart from faith in Jesus Christ, but that life is temporary, here today and gone tomorrow & extremely fragile!
- We may have "liberty" as Americans that protects us from oppressive authorities, but that liberty, apart from Christ, does not protect us from the power of sin, the bondage of our depravity, & the effects of the fall!
- We may have the right to "pursue happiness" as Americans, but without salvation in Christ, we could never experience true and everlasting joy!

It doesn't feel like the freedom of life, when we have no control over the number of our days, or that of our loved ones.

It doesn't feel like liberty when we can't break free from our own sinful desires, when hate and injustice run rampant even within our free society!

It doesn't feel like happiness when everything in this world leaves us unfulfilled, unsatisfied, and tirelessly seeking more!

I am so grateful for these unalienable rights/freedoms secured for us through the blood of fallen soldiers, but my heart longs for something more, something secured for us through the blood of our fallen & risen Savior!

It is only in Christ that we have ***"an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for us"–Vs. 4.*** This is true freedom!

And it's a freedom not guarded/protected by human soldiers, but by God Himself, a power that can never be overcome! This is the gospel!

This is why Peter says, ***"In this you/we rejoice..."*** True joy is found in that which is eternal, that which can be secured, that which is kept for us by God

This is what gets us through trials, persecution, hardships, grief, pandemics!

Example: The economic crash of Habakkuk's day – **Habakkuk 3:17-19**

- ***"Yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will take joy in the God of my salvation"***
- ***God, the Lord, is my strength;"***
- ***He makes my feet like the deer's;"***
- ***He makes me tread on high places."***
- ***To the choirmaster: with stringed instruments."***

How similar to what the Apostle Peter is saying here in **1 Peter 1:6-7**

Trials bring about opportunities for our faith to be tested & proven genuine!

Trials bring about praise & glory & honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ!

Trials bring about joy – found in Christ, the author & perfecter of our faith!

There is much in this world that can try to steal away our "life, liberty & pursuit of happiness", but true joy, even amidst suffering, can be our song!

I have never witnessed, in a time of war, a soldier give his life for our freedom, but I live with what his/her sacrifice has secured for each of us!

So too, we were not witnesses to Jesus laying down His life for us, but we get to live every day, into all eternity, with the freedom/joy He secured!

1 Peter 1:8-9 A gospel shaped life is a life defined by the joy we have in Christ!

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