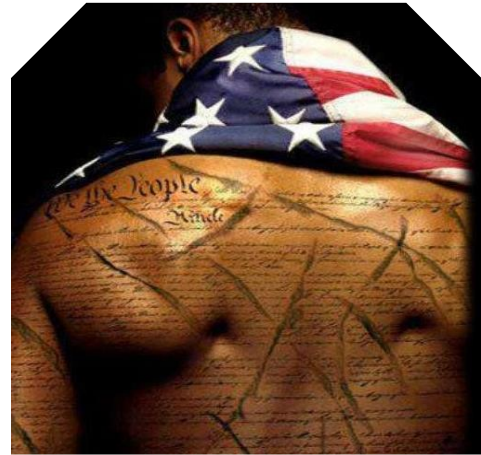


Celebrate Freedom!

I Corinthians 15:3-4

For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the scriptures . . .

July fourth is Independence Day, and all across U.S.A. people will celebrate. It is hard to imagine in the present climate of pandemic, protest and politics that America was founded on the idea that all people are created equal and that these people have fundamental rights, such as freedom of religion, liberty, speech, assembly and due process of law. Many Americans agreed with them but some found that the ideology was far more acceptable in the abstract than practice. As blessed as we are as a nation compared to other countries, the reality is that our country's history is tarnished. America's history is darkened with slavery, racism, sexism and the displacement of natives in order to build a more perfect union.



As a black in America, it difficult to celebrate the freedom of a nation that has continued to ignore the contributions of our ancestors. In every area of the American existence one can find contributions people of color have made. In the mist of this, African American have joined with European Americans to celebrate the freedom of this country who enslaved and marginalized them for over 400 years. Some ask, "How did we survive?" Only by the hand of God and saving power of His Son, Jesus Christ who sets us free spiritually. In addition to freedom as citizens in this country, still fighting for equality and equity, we who know Jesus Christ as our Savior have another kind of freedom to celebrate. We are free from the bondage of our sin and death.

Some may question our belief in this Jesus who has been portrayed by others as blonde haired, blue eyed and white. The truth is that Jesus as a man was a dark-skinned middle easterner residing in the north eastern part of Africa who preached, taught and spoke out against the injustices of humanity. The freedom He gives extends beyond racial limitations. It is broader than one's socio-economic status. It destroys racism and sexism. It frees the soul for the "whomsoever will." There is a freedom in Christ that gives the believer the right and strength to stand against the sin of injustice.

I Corinthians 15:1-4 gives a concise picture of the freedoms we have in Christ. First, “Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures.” He died for one reason: to pay the penalty necessary for our sins. He took our place. Because of His death, we are made free from the death penalty of sin and stand righteous before God. This is our justification.

Second, “that He was buried.” Romans 6 tells us that through faith we died with Him and were buried with Him and are now dead to the power of sin over us. Sin no longer has dominion over us, so we can choose to live righteous, holy lives. We are free from sin’s control over us! This is our sanctification.

Third, “that He rose again the third day according to the scriptures.” His death alone could not save us; it was the resurrection that showed God’s acceptance of Christ’s sacrifice, and that gives power unto salvation. In Colossians 3:1 we read that we are risen with Christ. His resurrection guarantees a future in Heaven for us where we will be free from the presence of sin. This is our glorification.

From that past moment when we truly believed, **we are free from the penalty of sin** . . . Free from the present power of sin over us . . . And guaranteed to one day be free from the presence of sin. Now that’s cause for celebration—every day!

“Free at last, free at last, thank God Almighty we are free at last.”