

Freedom

We just finished celebrating another Independence Day, remembering the day 239 years ago that the colonists declared independence from England. What we wanted to do was to be able to exercise our freedoms without any interference from what we considered a tyrannical government. We believed our freedoms, or rights, were God-given and should not be taken from us.

Our nation truly came into existence in 1607 when a group of people came to the Virginia shore seeking freedom to worship God as they felt He should be worshipped. Many of the groups that inhabited what would eventually become the United States (Puritans, Separatists, Quakers) came to be free from government-established religion that they felt was largely ceremonial and not based on biblical principles.

On July 4, 1776, our founding fathers met in Philadelphia to declare freedom from the dominance of the English king George III and his Parliament that had systematically taken freedom from the colonists. Four times, in the document we call the Declaration of Independence, God is referred to. They believed "Nature's God" had intitled them to be free from any other country's domination. Their Creator, they said, had given them the "unalienable rights" of "life, liberty (freedom), and the pursuit of happiness. They appealed to the "Supreme Judge of the World" for success and justification, and put their trust in what they called "divine Providence."

Our Constitution has a "Bill of Rights" in which are listed freedoms we hold dear: speech, religion, the press, lawful assembly, and petition. The Civil War was fought from 1861-1865 in an effort by southern states to be free from the dictates of what they felt was a government that was harmful to them. The United States fought the Civil War, in part, to allow freedom to the slaves in the United States (both in the North and in the South). The Spanish-American War was fought to protect the people of what had been formerly Spanish colonies, colonies that sought to remain free. Both World Wars were fought to free people from dominance by nations not their own. In 1941, Franklin Roosevelt, speaking to those oppressed by dictators such as Hitler, Mussolini, and Hirohito, believed all the people of the world should enjoy the freedoms of speech and worship, as well as "freedom from want" and "freedom from fear."

Arguably, all of the wars in which the United States has been were fought, in a large part, to win freedom for oppressed people. Korea, Vietnam, Iraq, Afghanistan, and other and numerous smaller conflicts freed millions from domination. Freedom, we feel, is that important.

However, the most important of the freedoms we enjoy have nothing to do with secular history. These freedoms, given to us by God, are the most important ones we should seek. In next week's NEWSLETTER, we'll look at them. Briefly, they are:

Freedom from the dominance of sin
Freedom from spiritual death
Freedom from worry.

I apologize for the lengthy history lesson, but I believe it was important to set up next week's article. Please, as they say, "stay tuned."