

“FREEDOM Where You Live”

By Brother Andy Giebler

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Morning. I count it a privilege to be here; I don't take it lightly. I pray I never do. Parrish, you set the stage; you talked about how we, three years ago, it was kind of, “Okay, we'll give it a year, and see where this goes.” No one's kicked us out, yet, Parrish, so I guess that's a good thing.

This morning, I'm going to talk about freedom. It's July; it's the last day of July. The beginning of this month is when we celebrate our freedom, our independence as a country. But, yet, we have many other freedoms to lay hold of. We put a flag up, and we say, “I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and to the republic, for which it stands. One nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all. We pledge our allegiance to that nation. But, yet, when I first hear, “I pledge allegiance to the flag...” that seems kind of stupid. But, it's more than a symbol; it's what represents our country. But, yet, we have a bigger freedom that we know of. A freedom that's not automatic. Just as you hear the statement that freedom isn't free; it had a price. Our freedom isn't free. And a lot of people don't understand that freedom in Christ, sometimes. Some people want to say that, you know, thy at like this country's free, and it's here forever; we don't have to do anything for it. And, sometimes, in Christ, we want to look at our freedom, and say, “Oh, it's there; I can't lose it.” It's true that it was a free gift; no man can take it away. But, you can walk away from it. You can not... I'm getting ahead of myself, here. I'm going to get some Scriptures out. We have a lot of people with a lot of opinions. This month, we want to look to our families. This is a month where, summertime; kids are getting ready to go back to school. This is the time when parents get to spend time with their kids, and say, “Hallelujah!” when they go back to school. We're talking about the times that we have with our families. If I had to give a title to this message, it's, “FREEDOM, Where You Live.” Freedom where we are, where we live our lives. And this freedom needs to be taught. We talked about our country, this freedom has to be taught. That's why we teach it in schools. And our messages, earlier this month, talked about watering down; you can't water down what we have in this country and expect it to keep doing what it's doing. We can't water down this message, this truth. We talked about one nation under God. In Genesis—I want to read this, because, when we think of nations, we look at borders, or boundaries.

Genesis 12:1-3 *Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.*

Our theme Scripture for the month is:

Isaiah 60:12 *For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted.*

We want to celebrate our country, our one nation under God, but, if you look at the people around us, it's evident that we're a nation of—the people of this nation are serving many gods. So, how do we say, as a nation, we're one nation under God? But, we look in the Old Testament, where Israel was. We think of Israel as a nation overseas, somewhere. But, Israel—we look at Jacob. Jacob wrestled an angel. The angel said, “Let me go,” and he said, “Not until you bless me.” He said, “What is your name? Your name is now, Israel.” He didn't name a chunk of land Israel. Yeah, there was a promised land for them,

but that chunk of land wasn't named Israel; the family was named Israel. The family hat was foretold in Genesis, with Abraham. All the families be blessed, "I will bless them and bless you." (Genesis 12:2-3) Even in this nation, you've seen it with your eyes, when people serve God, the people around are blessed. They may not know it, they may not realize it, they may not understand it, but they're blessed. And I'm still talking about our freedom, and I'm going to talk about some different points of our freedoms, and freedoms in our country, and freedoms that we have in Christ.

I want to set this up a little bit: Our freedom, where does it lie?

Galatians 3:25-29 *But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.*

No, I am not a Jew; I am not Jewish. I am German, by lineage, but, yet, our baptism into Christ. It says right here, if ye are in Christ, ye are Abraham's seed. We are that wild olive branch grafted in. We have an inheritance; we have our freedom. But, as I alluded earlier, it starts in the home; it begins in the place where we live. Yes, it began at Calvary, it began with the blood, it began with our acceptance, but, in life, our living. Where do we live, where do we spend our time? If you visualize your home, if you visualize, you know, walking in your front door, that portal into your home, what do you bring in to your home? And, sometimes, it's the simple things. I could say, "Ah, I'm a Christian, I've done this for years. I know what my house is set up like." Sometimes I've got to stop and think, what am I carrying through that door? Who am I inviting into that door? What purpose am I inviting them into that door? Walk into my kitchen. What kind of fellowship am I having there? My dining room, what kind of conversations am I having there? My wife, children, grandchildren, what am I teaching them? How am I exercising my freedom, there? What am I doing with that freedom, the freedom that I have in Christ, because I'm born again? That freedom can't be taken for granted, just like our country's can't. That freedom can't be taken for granted. Go into our living room, walk around through your house a little bit. Turn on the TV, take out a movie, a television program. Turn on the radio, and listen to some music. Is it glorifying God? Is it subtly tearing away at the roots of what we believe in most? Is it subtly tearing away at the morals, the things that we learn in Scriptures? Pick up a book to read. Is that book just as bad as an X-rated movie, an R-rated movie, or even a PG-13—"It's a book; it's not a movie! There's no pictures!" Where does it take your mind? Throughout our homes, throughout our days, when we take our kids places, when we take ourselves places, what do we do with our conversation? I'm talking about our freedom, and a lot of people have a lot of different ideas on freedom. I was out with our grandkids, yesterday, and we were going to fly kites in this big old field, and we get there, and we find that this big old field is now a parking lot. They're having taste of Wisconsin, up in Kenosha. So we sat in our lawn chairs, and we kind of relaxed, off to the side a little bit. We took the girls, we walked around, we had some corn on the cob, got something to eat, and I listened to a folk-singer girl, she was college-aged, talking about freedoms, from her perspective. Talking about, "You lay down your weapons; I'll lay down mine," talking about all that mentality, and I'm looking around the crowd at people I know that have served, people that have dedicated their lives to the military, people who have lived through world wars, lived through the Great Depression, and thinking of the stark prospective of those that say, "Oh, well, let's just all be love, joy, peace." And, sometimes, that's out perspective as a Christian: "Oh let's just all be love, joy, peace. Let them all do their thing; I'll do my thing." But there's got to be a line, somewhere. I can't just walk up to someone and just start railing on them for the sake of railing on them, but, we have a freedom in this country.

And that's where I'm going with our next topic: What freedoms do we have in this country? Our First Amendment says, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press, or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances. Freedom of due process, from illegal search and seizure..." So, the first priority was our freedom of speech. Some of the other things are freedom from—we're free from illegal search and seizure. That's just things of our country. We're free from cruel and unusual punishment. Those are things that we have, just based on being a United States citizen. We have the freedom, if we're accused of a crime, to be judged by a group of our peers, to appear before a judge, and to have that done in a process that's not out of order. It's done in a process that innocent or guilt is proven. I've heard people say that, you know, I would rather have a hundred guilty people go free than one innocent man charged for a crime.

Those are some freedoms that we have, because we live in the United States of America; because we're born here, or because—there are many that have come into this country and have gained citizenship, and they have gained that same freedom, as a United States citizen. There's a Scripture here, it's where Jesus was talking to Pilate, and He said:

John 18:36 *Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence.*

We have a human nature, to go and fight for the things of this earth, the things that we value. It's what we do. It's the nature that God gave us. And, yet, our freedom is much more than patriotism. Because I'm a Patriot. My core nature is, you know, someone comes and invades what I believe, go get my gun; I'm going to do something about it. That's my nature. But, sitting in a chair with a former a Marine—once a Marine, always a Marine—he was up there at the coffee shop. He's pretty gung-ho. He's one of those guys that I know, if I went to his house, he's got quite the armory. He's prepared. That's his mentality. And I thought that way. I served in the military; I served as a technician, I also served in a physical security capacity, so I know what it's like to pick up a gun and carry it. So, that's the kind of mentality that's there, but, it's something that God laid on my heart as I was sharing with him, I said, "You know what? It's nice to have a stockpile of something, and say, 'Yeah, I can defend myself,'" and I said, "You know what? If I need to defend my country, that's what I'll do. But, if all kind of craziness breaks out, and God says, 'Put your gun down and go preach; g tech My Word,' that's what I'm going to do. There's a time for both, but that's when we have to evaluate our freedoms; evaluate that spirit that's within us, because that's where—the point I'm getting at is, our freedom is spiritual. Where it comes from is God's Spirit, dwelling in us. We have the law, but, yet, we have God's Spirit, guiding us, showing us, giving us the things that we need to do, showing us the footsteps we need to take. So, our freedom's in Christ. Just to further that point:

Hebrews 13:14 *For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come.*

Yeah, we have this great nation. I'll be glad to stand up and say it's a great nation. But, we have no continuing city, here, but we seek one to come.

So, what makes us free In Christ?

Galatians 5:5 *Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.*

What makes us free? What are we free from? If we could turn to:

2 Corinthians 3:17 Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

There's liberty where His Spirit is. I've been in churches, I've been around people that want to deny the Spirit of God. They want to deny His presence, they want to deny the power, they want to say there's no miracles, they want to say there's no more working in God's Spirit, and that's just not true. Because, without that Spirit, we are none of His (Romans 8:9).

Romans 6:1-7 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin.

That's a freedom this country can't top. We're free from sin. Sin? Why is that important that we're free from sin? Sin is death. Sin is what separates us from God. We can't say, "Oh, I want a little of this, here, and a little of that," no, we have to be free from sin. We have to seek that out on a daily basis. And there is a condemnation, and there is a guilt, and:

Romans 8:1-3 There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:

How do people know, talking about this freedom—we look at people who fly their flags for their country, and put on bumper stickers—how do people know that that's our freedom? How do they know that we've got something to offer? There's a lot of bumper stickers out there—I'm not, if somebody wants to put a bumper sticker, that's fine, but that's not how we show our faith. It's how we live. Let's talk about a—we talk about a pledge to our country, what about a pledge to our Savior? What about a pledge to the Gospel? We have a pledge to God. It's not even about church, per se, because, church, having a service, if it's not led of God, if it's not of His Spirit, if it's not grounded in that freedom, it's just another organization. I pray that we never get there. I pray that we're bound by that same Spirit.

So, we enjoy this freedom, this freedom that we show, we confess... What do we do with it? Going back to the question, how do people see it? There are some certain things that people need to see in my life, if I profess to be a Christian. If I'm saying I'm of God, if I'm saying that Spirit is within me, those things should be evident.

Galatians 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace...

Those are things that people seek for all their lives. They seek it in relationships, they seek it in people, they seek it in their job, they seek it in money; they look for a lot of joy and peace in all those things, and it's not there; it's only in the Spirit of God.

Galatians 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness...

These are things that people strive for. “I need to be more gentle, kind; I need to be good.” I can strive for those things all I want. They’re all good, but, to truly have these things as we’re talking about—if I want to have longsuffering, I need to seek God’s Spirit. That’s an evidence of God’s Spirit. If I want to be more longsuffering, if I want to be more gentle; if I want to have more meekness, more faith, more temperance, I could find a how-to book. There’s a million and one of them out there. I could find a self-help book. But I should really find myself on my knees. I should find myself saying, “God, how do I get closer to You? Show me how I can get what You want for me. Order my steps.

Galatians 5:24 *And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. 25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.*

To walk in that Spirit, and I’m going to go back to, that walk starts at birth. Not our physical birth of our mothers, but it starts at our birth in Christ. Because, without that birth, without that blood being applied, without having been raised to walk in newness of life, we don’t have that.

Another question: What am I doing with my freedom? In our country, what do we do with that freedom? Sometimes, as Americans, we kind of grow numb to some of the freedoms we have. When we see people that come over to this country, not much money in their pockets, they get out and they make themselves something. They get out and start a business. They do something, because that’s what they set out to do when they came here. They say, I see a better life over there, and I’m going to go get it. My wife tells me about their mom, had a situation in Puerto Rico to get away from. Made a plan, put her kids on a plane, got to a friend’s house in the United States. Didn’t have a college, or scholarship. Didn’t have some big pot of money to draw from. She came over; she made a life for her family. There are many people that have done that. We hear lots of stories, coming in, coming off a boat, starting something. Like I said, my family came from Germany, came from a passion, came with a vision, “There’s something there I’m going to get.” And, that’s why we come to Christ, looking for that freedom. And, yet, sometimes, when you’ve been here a while, we start to forget. We start to—I’ll just say me. I forget. I forget that passion. I forget what I came looking for. I forget about that freedom that I found, over twenty years ago, 1989. I found it in a watery grave. I found it in a message I’d never heard before. I grew up in church; I went to church all my life. You were talking earlier a Scripture talking about he didn’t come from a—Amos—a lineage of prophets. Isn’t there another one that talks about a preacher’s lineage? Same one? (Amos 7:14) I come from a religious background. It didn’t save me. My grandfather was a preacher. My uncles have all been to Christian colleges. One of my uncles, before he passed way, was a chaplain in a hospital. And I know these are men that were doing something; they were active. When he died, I was on-line, trying to get his obituary to come up, and I found tons of obituaries. None of them were his; they were all obituaries of funerals that he was presiding over. So I come from that background, but, as I said, that doesn’t make me any less, any better, it doesn’t change the fact that I had to seek for something. I had to go find something. I had something that was missing from my life. A freedom that I had never had. Even though I grew up in church. I remember, Sunday mornings, “Ma, do we *have* to go to church?” “No, you *get* to.” I was going to church, whether I liked it or not. And I’m thankful for that; I’m glad that I did. But, I still had to find something on my own. I still had to come to a realization that I needed Christ real I my life. It wasn’t about church, it wasn’t about the preacher, it wasn’t about the choir singing; it was me and God.

And, I want to touch on, how are we, how are we in this room, when it comes to the Gospel’s sake, how are we using the freedom that we have in this country? We have tis freedom of speech. We have this freedom of telling people about it. There may be a day when we don’t have that. We are very privileged in this country. In some other countries—you go across the ocean, you’re going to find countries where you can get thrown in jail, you can be killed, you can be beaten, take everything you own, because you’re talking about this Jesus.

We're going to look at a Scripture. Now Peter, he's healing people, preaching, and they put him in prison. An angel came; got him out. Tells him to go to the Temple and preach. After they put him in prison. Angel said, "Go preach." They go to the prison looking for him; everything looked good on the outside. They go inside and he's gone. Find him in the Temple doing exactly what they told him not to do. And they brought him back, and called him, and charged him to not preach this Gospel. And Peter says:

Acts 5:29 *Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men*

Just simply said, "Look, I know what you're telling me. I know you're charging me not to talk about Jesus." This is Peter, he says, "I ought to obey God, rather than men." I'm highlighting this because, once again, we may not have that freedom someday. We may not have that ability to openly worship. Like I said, there are countries right now, somebody would be watching the door, because there may be armed guards coming to break up your church service. I know that's painting a grim picture, but we have this Gospel, and it's too important not to share.

This freedom. God gives us lots of things. Sometimes I've got to wonder if I'm leaving something on the table. My mom and dad, I think back, they gave me lots of things, you know, and gave me incentives for things, grades—and for my grades, and different things. And they gave me things I needed, and I remember the first time I got my nice Red Rider Daisy BB gun, and it was just what I always wanted. And they did things for me. But, I remember one time, I wasn't doing good in school, and they said, "Keep your grades above a B..."—not straight A's, just a B—they weren't shooting for a lot, they just wanted me to get involved—"we'll get you a motorcycle." I knew how bad my mom hated motorcycles, but, yet, she was going to offer, and I never even made a plan. I didn't even say, "I'm going to find a way to make my grades better," because, we make plans when we want things. I know, when I was in the Navy, I wanted to make E-6, and the only way I was going to do it was to study for that exam. I made a plan for that. I got all the material, I figured out how all the points were added up, I figured out, "I need that award, I need to study this, I need to get that button pushed, I need to do this, I need this interview, I need this letter of commendation," I knew the things I needed to do to get my points, and I made a plan to do it. But, this one thing that I really wanted, I let it go. I never said, "I'm going to find a way to study. I'm going to find a way to stay awake in class. I'm going to find a way to pay attention." I let down the team. And, we have a Scriptural example: The parable of the talents. The Master gave three different men three different things. The one that was blessed was the one who did something with it. The one who just held it, buried it in the ground, and said, "Here. This is what you gave me. It's yours. Have it back," was cast out. But, yet, He said, take it from him, and give it to the one who did something with his (Matthew 25:14-30). And that's part of our freedom. But, it's not just handed to us. It's not just, "Well, here you go." I've never looked at any person in this room and said, "I expect you to do this," as far as, "You're going to rise to this or that." I have things that I'd like to see people do, and goals, as a leader, and, yet, those are things that—I don't know what everyone's ability is; I don't know what God has placed in your life. God does show us things, but there some things God didn't tell us, in your life, that only you know about. That only God has revealed to you. And I bring that up because I just want to see this ministry grow, and I'm encouraged by—and I see it every day, there are those of you do have your talents out, I see it multiplied every time we come together. I see people doing—not just things, but growing in the Spirit, growing in the Word, coming higher in Christ.

Jesse made an example, talking about slaves that were being rescued, and there were slaves that were not; they were settled. The statement was made, "I could have saved more, if only they had known they were in bondage, if they had known they were slaves." And I believe, going back to our revolution, there were people that were content to say, "Oh, don't make waves. We don't need this freedom from

England. Stop it. You're making a mess of things!" But there were those who were willing to stand up and declare their independence. And that's the question today: Am I willing to go back and revisit, and stand up and declare my independence, my freedom from sin? It's personal; I have to declare that. Now, that freedom doesn't come from me; that freedom comes from the blood of Christ. But I still have to do something. I still have to submit myself to His Word. I have to declare my freedom. I have to declare it every day. I have to die daily. That's the beauty of it, the way it clears it—the forgiveness that we have every day. The blood of Jesus Christ can be applied every day. Sometimes we have a tendency to look, and say, "Oh, I've gone too far. I can't go back." If God's still tugging at you, poking at you, you haven't gone too far, but you can't stay where you're at. God wants to bring people, and, sometimes the trip back is not as far as you think it is, it's just a matter of turning around, and declaring that independence.

So, how do I know what's for me? I have a Scripture that I lean on quite often:

Matthew 6:33 *But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.*

It's not that complicated: Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. Let me ask a question: How do I seek the Kingdom of God? How do I seek His righteousness? The Kingdom of God, we've got to seek—I've got to seek something higher than me. I have to seek, first, God's Kingdom. I have to seek things that glorify God and His righteousness. Flip that backwards: Not my righteousness. Seek ye first His righteousness; is what I'm doing His righteousness? Because if it's not God's righteousness, then it's not leading me to freedom. If it's for my own righteousness' sake, it's for naught. I've got to seek Him first.

Another one that I lean on quite a bit is:

Matthew 22:36-37 *Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, **Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.***

With all.

Matthew 22:39 *And the second is like unto it, **Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.***

So, He's talking about two commandments, here. The first one: Love God with all. And the second—so, you've got one, and you've got number two, right here, almost to it: To love your neighbor as yourself. And, you know, when I get up here, it's one that I make a point of, quite a bit, but it's, on that hang all the Law and the prophets. And, we could study the law, but, yet, this commandment, right here: If you're loving your neighbor, as yourself, it's kind of hard to not fulfil the rest of the Law. Not to say that we shouldn't learn the Bible or learn the Old Testament, but, there's a lot of conviction there, for my part. Loving my neighbor as myself.

And, another piece of this is: How we celebrate our freedom? Now, in our country, we have celebrations, we have parades, we have fireworks shows... We have all kinds of things to celebrate our independence. How do I celebrate my freedom? We look at the Jews, Israel, when they were released from bondage, when they left Egypt, what did they set up? Passover. What was that celebration? That was something they did, every year, as their celebration. It was their reminder of their deliverance from Egypt. And, as I wrap this up, I, hopefully, will make this simple point of where our freedom lies: Our freedom lies in Jesus. As the Communion team gets ready. This is also a way we celebrate our freedom. We remember our freedom. We remember the blood that was shed. We remember—it's a time to remember the commitments we make. A time of reflection. Communion. They're going to come up here, when they're ready, and they're going to give us a wafer and a cup of juice. But, it's the bread, the body

of Christ. We've got to remember that. The blood. His shed blood, that was shed for me. I've got to remember that. I've got to remember that every day I wake up. This isn't just a time—well, we do this once a month. This should not be the only time we have this communion with God. This is just a reminder. This is just a time that we do it as a reminder. But, it's important. We've got to have that communion with God. A remembrance of what God did for us. If you look throughout the Old Testament, there are times when God's nation, got away, and they read out loud the Scriptures, to remind the people where they came from, to remind them what God did for them. As the communion team comes up, and I turn this over to Chris, my prayer is that we will use this time to look at our freedom, to evaluate that freedom we have in Christ, to evaluate what we do with it, how we use it, evaluate our own personal communion with God, our own personal time. Amen.

