

# Flag Day

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June 14

## Liberty and Christianity—What’s the Connection?

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

Galatians 5:1

*The great and wise Author of our being has so formed us  
that the love of liberty is natural.*

John Tucker<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

Most Americans have recited the pledge of allegiance to the flag of America thousands of times. We have repeated the words, “one nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all,” not thinking of the connection of the words *liberty* and *under God*. Our flag represents a republican form of government, which has as its core principle the maximization of liberty for each individual. But what do we mean by liberty? After all, there are so many ways that we define liberty. What is the true meaning of liberty, and what does it have to do with our being *under God*? What, if any, is the connection between liberty and Christianity?

Our key verse for this teaching is stated above. The sad truth is we Americans have not stood fast in the truth. We have not been diligent to preserve truth and pass it down to the next generation. Consequently we have become entangled again in the yoke of bondage.

James Madison stated,

*It is proper to take alarm at the first experiment on our liberties. We hold this prudent jealousy to be the first duty of citizens and one of the noblest characteristics of the late Revolution. The freemen of America did not wait till usurped power had strengthened itself by exercise and entangled the question in precedents. They saw all the consequences in the principle [usurpation of power], and they avoided the consequences by denying [preventing] the principle. We revere this lesson too much . . . to forget it.<sup>2</sup>*

Daniel Webster, American lawyer, statesman and orator stated,

*God grants liberty only to those who love it, and are always ready to guard and defend it.<sup>3</sup>*

Samuel Webster, in an election sermon in 1777, stated:

*Power, especially over-grown power, whets the ambition and sets all the wits to work to enlarge it. Therefore, encroachments on the people’s liberties are not generally made all at once, but so gradually as hardly to be perceived by the less watchful; and all plaistered over, it may be, with such plausible pretences, that before they are aware of the snare, they are taken and cannot disentangle themselves.<sup>4</sup>*

What about us today; do we love liberty, as God defines it? Are we ready to be vigilant and to guard and defend our liberty? Do we care enough about our children and our children's children to pass on to them a legacy of liberty? If so, we have much work and intercession to do.

## Liberty Defined

Liberty is a self-evident truth. Thomas Jefferson wrote in the Declaration of Independence,

*We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, that among them are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.*

The fact that God created us equal and that He gave us rights that cannot be taken away from us, such as the right to liberty, is a truth that any thinking person knows. God instilled the desire for liberty in every man, for we are created to be free!

Webster separates *liberty* into many different categories; we will focus on religious and civil liberty. Webster defines religious *liberty* as,

*the free right of adopting and enjoying opinions on religious subjects, and of worshipping the Supreme Being according to the dictates of conscience, without external control.*<sup>5</sup>

Notice that religious liberty is the right to worship the Supreme Being, not the right to worship false gods or participate in pagan religions. Webster defines *civil liberty* as,

*the liberty of men in a state of society, or natural liberty, so far only abridged and restrained, as is necessary and expedient for the safety and interest of the society, state or nation. A restraint of natural liberty, not necessary or expedient for the public, is tyranny or oppression. Civil liberty is an exemption from the arbitrary will of others, which exemption is secured by established laws, which restrain man from injuring or controlling another. Hence the restraints of law are essential to civil liberty.*<sup>6</sup>

English political philosopher John Locke defines *civil liberty* as:

*TO understand Political Power, right, and derive it from its Original, we must consider, what State all Men are naturally in, and that is, A STATE OF PERFECT FREEDOM to order their Actions, and dispose their Possessions, and Persons as they think fit, within the bounds of the Law of Nature, without asking leave, or depending upon the Will of any other Man. But though this be A STATE OF LIBERTY, yet IT IS NOT A STATE OF LICENCE . . . The STATE OF NATURE has a Law of Nature to govern it, which obliges every one: And Reason, which is that Law, teaches all Mankind, who will but consult it, that being all EQUAL AND INDEPENDENT, no one ought to harm another in his Life, Health, Liberty, or Possessions. For Men being all the Workmanship of one Omnipotent, and infinitely wise Maker: All the Servants of one Sovereign Master, sent into the World by his Order, and about his Business, they are His Property, whose Workmanship they are . . .*<sup>7</sup>

Webster and Locke agree; every man is at liberty to live his life as he sees fit within the bounds of the law, and he is free from the arbitrary will of man. The law should restrict liberty only as necessary for the safety and interest of society.

Locke points out that we use the term *liberty* when what we are really referring to is a misuse of liberty, which is really license. *License*, says Webster, is

*Excess of liberty; exorbitant freedom; freedom abused, or used in contempt of law or decorum.*<sup>8</sup>

From *license* we get the Biblical term *licentiousness*.

The Bible gives, as a condition for liberty, the keeping of God’s law:

*So shall I keep thy law continually forever and ever. And I will walk at liberty: for I seek thy precepts. Psalm 119:44-45*

### How Internal Liberty from Sin Produces External Liberty

Spiritual liberty, or freedom from the power of sin, is the most important aspect of liberty; it is primary. But a secondary, and yet extremely vital, aspect of liberty is freedom from the tyranny of man and of collective man (the state). External, civil liberty is produced by internally free men. This is the heritage that we have as Americans; our nation’s founders practiced internal Christian self-government and produced the freest civil government that the world has known since the Hebrew Republic. The passages of Scripture in this chart indicate the fact that when we are free from the power of sin and apply God’s Word to every sphere of life, we will eventually enjoy civil liberty also, that is, freedom from the tyranny of men.

#### Liberty

Internal (Primary)	External (Secondary)
<p>Romans 6:6, 12, 14, 16, 18 <i>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. (v.6); Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. (v.12); For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. (v.14); Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? (v.16); Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness. (v.18)</i></p> <p>Galatians 2:4 <i>And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage.</i></p> <p>John 8:32 <i>And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.</i></p> <p>II Corinthians 5:17 <i>If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!</i></p>	<p>I Corinthians 9:19 <i>For though I am free from all men . . .</i></p> <p>I Corinthians 7:23 <i>Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men.</i></p> <p>I Peter 2:16 <i>As free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God.</i></p> <p>Isaiah 33:22 <i>For the LORD is our judge, the LORD is our lawgiver, the LORD is our king; he will save us.</i></p> <p>Joshua 21:43-45 <i>And the LORD gave unto Israel all the land which he swore to give unto their fathers; and they possessed it, and dwelt therein. And the LORD gave them rest round about, according to all that he swore unto their fathers: and there stood not a man of all their enemies before them; the LORD delivered all their enemies into their hand. There failed not ought of any good thing which the LORD had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass.</i></p> <p>Leviticus 25:17 <i>Ye shall not therefore oppress one another; but thou shalt fear thy God: for I am the LORD your God.</i></p> <p>Isaiah 61:1 <i>The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.</i></p>

### How Internal Bondage to Sin Produces External Bondage

Bondage is defined by Webster as

*In scripture, spiritual subjection to sin and corrupt passions, or to the yoke of the ceremonial law; servile fear.<sup>9</sup>*

Christ was sent by the Father to deliver us from this subjection to sin and our corrupt lusts and passions. Only through accepting what He has done for us and yielding to Him in obedience can we become free from the bondage

that causes us to do that which is abhorrent to God. If we refuse God’s plan to be delivered from internal bondage, eventually this will result in various forms of external bondage. The following verses teach this truth.

## Bondage

Internal (Primary)	External (Secondary)
<p>John 8:34 <i>Jesus replied, ‘I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin.’</i></p> <p>Romans 8:5 <i>For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.</i></p> <p>II Peter 2:19 <i>While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage.</i></p>	<p>I Corinthians 7:23 <i>You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men.</i></p> <p>Exodus 2:23 <i>During that long period, the king of Egypt died. The Israelites groaned in their slavery and cried out, and their cry for help because of their slavery went up to God.</i></p> <p>I Samuel 8:11–17 <i>And he said, This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you: He will take your sons, and appoint them for himself, for his chariots, and to be his horsemen; and some shall run before his chariots. And he will appoint him captains over thousands, and captains over fifties; and will set them to till his ground, and to reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war, and instruments of his chariots. And he will take your daughters to be confectionaries, and to be cooks, and to be bakers. And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your oliveyards, even the best of them, and give them to his servants. And he will take the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give to his officers, and to his servants. And he will take your menservants, and your maidservants, and your goodliest young men, and your asses, and put them to his work. He will take the tenth of your sheep: and ye shall be his servants.</i></p> <p>Ezra 9:9 <i>For we were bondmen; yet our God hath not forsaken us in our bondage, but hath extended mercy unto us in the sight of the kings of Persia, to give us a reviving, to set up the house of our God, and to repair the desolations thereof, and to give us a wall in Judah and in Jerusalem.</i></p>

## Liberty in the Hebrew Republic

God constituted the government of His special people, the Israelites, so that they enjoyed the maximum of civil liberty when they obeyed His law and worshipped Him alone. He gave them the Law through Moses, and this Law was designed to grant external civil liberty when the Israelites practiced internal self-government. We know that when they strayed from God’s Law and love, as they did repeatedly, they paid the penalty often by means of civil tyranny. This tyranny could either be from within (being given an evil king as ruler) or without (being allowed to be taken captive, such as the captivity in Babylon). Nineteenth century Presbyterian pastor Rev. E.C. Wines eloquently describes the liberty of God’s people:

*Another of those great ideas, which constituted the basis of the Hebrew state, was liberty.*

*Liberty is a word often uttered, but seldom understood. It is the theme of much glowing declamation, but of little sober inquiry. Poets and orators have eulogized the charms of liberty; demagogues use the word every day, as an instrument of political advancement; yet few, comparatively, investigate or comprehend its nature. Civil liberty, the liberty of a community, is a severe and restrained thing. The fundamental idea of it is that of protection in the enjoyment of our own rights, up to the point where we begin to trench upon the rights of others. It is natural liberty, so far restrained, and only so far, as may be necessary for the public good. Every law, which abridges personal freedom, without a corresponding general advantage, is an infringement of civil liberty. But it is no infringement of liberty to restrain the freedom of individuals, when the*

public good requires it. On the contrary, civil liberty implies, in the very notion of it, authority, subjection, and obedience. Montesquieu has well defined it, when he says, that it consists in the power of doing what we ought to will, and in not being constrained to do what we ought not to will. (*Spirit of Laws*. B.II.C.3.) Liberty is a right of doing what the laws permit. If one citizen might do what they forbid, all might do it, which would be anarchy. True liberty would expire in such a state of things.

This rational, restrained, regulated liberty was amply secured by the Hebrew constitution. In the preamble to the Ten Commandments, (*Exodus 20:2*) before cited, God expressly declares, that he had brought his people out of the house of bondage. In another place he says: I have broken the bands of your yoke, and made you go upright. (*Leviticus 26:13*) These expressions, rendered into their modern equivalents, mean: I have delivered you out of a state of servitude, and constituted you a nation of freemen. Is Israel a slave? cries Jeremiah, (*Leviticus 2:14*)—his heart bursting with sadness at the contrast between the freedom secured by the constitution of his country and the vassalage imposed upon his countrymen by foreign arms. The learned Fleury (*Manners of the Israelites*, C.20.) has declared his opinion on this point in unequivocal terms. The Israelites, he says, were perfectly free. They enjoyed the liberty cherished by Greece and Rome. Such was the purpose of God. Montesquieu (*Spirit of Laws*, B.18.C.3) makes a reflection, which is applicable here. He says, that countries are not cultivated in proportion to their fertility, but to their liberty. Tried by this test, the freedom of Palestine will bear a favorable comparison with that of any nation in any age of the world; for never was territory more highly cultivated or more productive, than that of the chosen tribes, in the palmy days of their history.

The freedom, secured by the polity of Moses, will more fully appear as we advance in our inquiries. There is no doubt, that the constitution was as free as it could be, consistently with its own safety and stability; and it is probable that the Hebrew people enjoyed as great a degree of personal liberty as can ever be combined with an efficient and stable government.<sup>10</sup>

## Our Founders on the Bond Between Liberty and Christianity

The following quotes are representative of the thinking during our founding era. During this period of time, it was generally believed that there was a direct connection between the degree of external civil liberty in a nation and how the nation honored God and His ways.

Charles Turner of Duxbury Massachusetts declared in an election sermon in 1773,

*Religious liberty is so blended with civil, that if one falls it is not to be expected that the other will continue.*<sup>11</sup>

The Reverend John Witherspoon, a member of the Continental Congress, in a fast day sermon called for by the Continental Congress, in 1776 stated the following:

*It is in the man of piety and inward principle that we may expect to find the uncorrupted patriot, the useful citizen, and the invincible soldier,—God grant that in America true religion and civil liberty may be inseparable, and the unjust attempts to destroy the one, may in the issue tend to the support and establishment of both. To the kindly influence of Christianity we owe that degree of civil freedom and political and social happiness which mankind now enjoy. In proportion as the genuine effects of Christianity are diminished in any nation, either through unbelief, or the corruption of its doctrines, or the neglect of its institutions; in the same proportion will the people of that nation recede from the blessings of genuine freedom, and approximate the miseries of complete despotism. I hold this to be a truth confirmed by experience. If so, it follows, that all efforts made to destroy the foundations of our holy religion, ultimately tend to the subversion also of our political freedom and happiness. Whenever the pillars of Christianity shall be overthrown, our present republican forms of government, and all the blessings which flow from them, must fall with them.*<sup>12</sup>

Samuel Adams stated that

*The right to freedom being the gift of God Almighty, it is not in the power of man to alienate this gift and voluntarily become a slave.<sup>13</sup>*

Samuel Adams also stated this:

*A general dissolution of principles and manners will more surely overthrow the liberties of America than the whole force of the common enemy. While the people are virtuous they cannot be subdued; but when they lose their virtue they will be ready to surrender their liberties to the first external or internal invader . . . If virtue and knowledge are diffused among the people, they will never be enslaved. This will be their great security.<sup>14</sup>*

Benjamin Rush, physician and signer of the Declaration of Independence, declared that

*The only foundation for . . . a republic is to be laid in Religion. Without this there can be no virtue, and without virtue there can be no liberty, and liberty is the object and life of all republican governments.<sup>15</sup>*

Andrew Johnson stated the following:

*Let us look forward to the time when we can take the flag of our country and nail it below the Cross, and there let it wave as it waved in the olden times, and let us gather around it and inscribe for our motto: 'Liberty and Union, one and inseparable, now and forever,' and exclaim, 'Christ first, our country next!'<sup>16</sup>*

Noah Webster commented on the importance of Christianity and education:

*In my view, the Christian religion is the most important and one of the first things in which all children, under a free government, ought to be instructed. . . . No truth is more evident to my mind than that the Christian religion must be the basis of any government intended to secure the rights and privileges of a free people . . .<sup>17</sup>*

## Loss of liberty

The more we know about the Biblical ideals of liberty, the more we will realize that we have lost so much of the liberty that God desires us to have. The sad condition of our nation is that although most Americans realize that we have national problems, most do not realize the extent to which we have become enslaved. We do not fully understand what it is that has brought us to our current condition and what it will take to bring about the needed change. In short, we neither understand the **problem** nor the **solution**.

This great nation, which has experienced the heights of liberty, is now experiencing bondage that is the inevitable fruit of an unregenerate people. Volumes have been written on the loss of liberty in our nation. We have no need of rehearsing all of the sad details, but will summarize these losses in the categories of religious, economic, civil and educational liberty:

Religious Liberty—Freedom of religion has been *turned on its head* and become “freedom from Christianity”. Freedom of religion, originally in our nation the ability to worship Almighty God according to the dictates of your conscience, is now the right of pluralism; the right to worship any “god” you desire, even a god of your own making. Christianity is increasingly being pushed out of the public forum, which is primarily the government schools, civil governments and the media.

**Economic Liberty**—In 2004 the average working person toiled 189 days to meet the costs necessary to run their local, state and federal governments. The current total rate of taxation is between 40 and 45%. God only requires 10%, so this fact alone indicates the degree of tyranny under which we are living. The massive debt that we are under also means that we are slaves, as “the borrower is servant to the lender” (Proverbs 22:7).

**Civil Liberty**—Rather than fulfilling their responsibility to punish evildoers and praise those that do good, civil government has become messianic in nature. Rather than God being our provider, government is now our provider. Whoever provides for you is your master.

**Educational Liberty**—There are currently 30 million functionally illiterate people in our nation, products of our public schools; and two million more are added each year. Depending on the state, taxpayers pay anywhere from \$12,000–27,000 annually per student for this educational disaster. In addition, “public school” education prevents children from learning the Biblical ideas of liberty. Instead, it teaches ideas that perpetuate the bondage in which we live.

Consider these other ways that we have lost, and are losing our liberties:

**Crime**—The loss of character has brought about a crime rate that affects every American directly or indirectly. Consider how much time and energy we spend working on ways to protect our life and property from loss: locks, security guards, cameras, security systems, background checks and arming ourselves. In spite of these efforts many experience the devastating effects of criminal activity.

**Parental rights**—Parents were once free to direct the upbringing of their children according to their values. With the growth of a meddling government, coupled with parents who have abused their parental authority, there is now a whole industry of social services that sometimes oversteps its boundaries. Parents are harassed, accused of neglect, or worse—some have their children removed from them for the crime of sending their children to a Christian school, for homeschooling them, or for administering the Biblical rod of discipline.

**Loss of life**—The most basic form of liberty is to be free to live (and therefore enjoy all other liberties). Children who suffer the fruit of the pro-choice movement do not even begin the experience of life and liberty that God designed for them. The suicide rate is another indication that we are not enjoying the liberty of life.

Need I go on? We could spend more time discussing the loss of life and liberty that is the result of child abuse, divorce, immorality, pornography and terrorism. A more sobering truth is that even despite our problems in America, we still enjoy a much greater degree of liberty than most of the nations on earth. Many nations would gladly trade their level of liberty with the U.S., since they live with totalitarian governments, military coups, human rights abuses, refugee problems, secret police and widespread poverty. The heart of a loving God is broken when He sees the condition of a people that He created to live and walk in perfect liberty.

## **The Solution: What We Can do to Regain Lost Liberties**

In order to regain the lost civil, economic, religious and educational liberties that we once enjoyed in great measure in our nation, we must once again regain the internal liberty that comes as a result of being freed by Christ from bondage to sin. After being freed from sin, Christ will lead us into the development of Christian self-government and Christian character. When we develop Christian self-government and Christian character in our personal lives, we will naturally want to extend these concepts to the other spheres of life. Thus, we will develop godly-charactered and self-governed families, churches, businesses and voluntary organizations. Finally, we will extend the blessings of liberty to the civil realm.

## Conclusion: Liberty and the Seven Principles

The seven principles of America's Christian history and government are all needed in order to produce and sustain liberty.

**L**ocal Self-Government

**I**ndividuality

**B**e Self-Governed

**E**xamples of Christian Character

**R**espect other's property, especially their conscience

**T**he Biblical Principles Forming Our Government

**Y**ou and God in Unity

## Celebrate Flag Day with Your Family!

- Make a list of vital liberties.
- Discuss the relationship between internal and external liberty.
- Fly your flag.
- Help your children memorize the pledge of allegiance.

## Endnotes

1. Franklin Cole, editor, *They Preached Liberty* (Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Press), 75
2. David W. Stedman, *Our Ageless Constitution* (Evanston, IL: W. David Stedman Assoc., 1987), 270
3. William J. Federer, *America's God and Country: Encyclopedia of Quotations* (Coppell, TX: FAME Publishing, Inc.), 451
4. Franklin Cole, editor, *They Preached Liberty*, 90-91
5. Noah Webster, *American Dictionary of the English Language*, facsimile of the 1828 edition (San Francisco, CA: Foundation for American Christian Education, 1967)
6. Ibid
7. Verna M. Hall, *The Christian History of the Constitution of the United States of America*, Vol. II: *Christian Self-Government With Union* (San Francisco, CA: Foundation for American Christian Education, 1962), 72
8. Noah Webster, *American Dictionary of the English Language*, 1828
9. Ibid
10. E.C. Wines, *The Roots of the American Republic* (Plymouth, MA: Plymouth Rock Foundation, Inc.), 9, 10
11. Franklin Cole, editor, *They Preached Liberty*, 161
12. Verna M. Hall, *The Christian History of the Constitution of the United States of America*, Vol. I: *Christian Self-Government* (San Francisco, CA: Foundation for American Christian Education, 1966), Ib
13. Ibid, 367
14. Rosalie J. Slater, *Teaching and Learning America's Christian History* (San Francisco, CA: Foundation for American Christian Education, 1965), 251
15. Federer, *America's God and Country*, 543
16. Ibid, 334
17. Noah Webster, *American Dictionary of the English Language*, 1828