

## **Freedom Is Never Free**

Ronald Reagan once said that our fallen military heroes gave up two lives: the life they were living while defending our nation, and the life they could have lived had they returned home.

For more than 25 years, I have served as Creative Director of the Air & Sea Show part of the National Salute to America's Heroes. Our mission has always been to restore the true meaning of Memorial Day—to honor the men and women who gave their lives for our freedom and make it more than a backyard barbecue, a mattress sale, or the unofficial start of summer.

Recently, a doctor asked me a simple question: "Do you want quality of life or duration of life?" Without hesitation, I chose quality of life.

As I reflected on that question during this year's Air & Sea Show, while creating the artwork commemorating 250 years of Americans defending freedom, I thought about the thousands of young men and women who never made it home. Most were between 20 and 35 years old. Yet in those few years, they accomplished more than many do in a lifetime. They learned difficult skills, faced extraordinary challenges, overcame fear and uncertainty, and lived lives marked by courage, duty, resilience, and sacrifice.

Jesus said:

*"Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends."* — John 15:13 (NKJV)

Soon afterward, He demonstrated that love on the cross. In just 33½ years, Jesus changed the world through His teaching, healing, service, and ultimate sacrifice.

When I look at America's fallen heroes and when I look at Jesus, I am reminded of the same truth:

**Freedom is never free. Someone always pays the price.**

Our earthly freedom was purchased through the sacrifice of brave men and women willing to give everything for others.

Our eternal freedom was purchased by Jesus Christ, who gave everything so that we might have eternal life.

Yet the Bible makes an important distinction between **Liberty** and **Freedom**.

## **Liberty vs. Freedom**

**Liberty** is the God-given ability to choose.

**Freedom** is the result of choosing what is true, right, and righteous. Many people have liberty but never experience freedom because they use their liberty to return to bondage.

The story of the Bible is God's plan to take people from bondage to liberty and from liberty to true freedom.

### **1. Liberty Becomes Freedom When We Make the Right Choice**

*"Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage."* — Galatians 5:1 (NKJV)

*"For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another."* — Galatians 5:13 (NKJV)

Christ has given us liberty, but we still choose daily whether we will walk in freedom or return to bondage. Liberty gives us the ability to choose. Freedom comes when we choose God's way.

### **2. Liberty Becomes Freedom When It Is Given by Christ**

Jesus announced His earthly mission by declaring:

*"The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed."* — Luke 4:18 (NKJV)

People are held captive by sin, addiction, fear, lust, bitterness, pride, and unbelief.

Others are oppressed by tyrants, injustice, abuse, greed, and the misuse of power. Jesus came to break those chains and offer liberty to all.

### **3. Liberty Becomes Freedom Through Truth**

Jesus said:

*"If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."* — John 8:31–32 (NKJV)

To abide means to dwell, remain, and continue. A disciple is a student, pupil, or apprentice. The people listening believed they were already free, but Jesus revealed a deeper bondage.

*"Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin."* — John 8:34 (NKJV)

Then He gave the answer:

*"Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed."* — John 8:36 (NKJV)

Freedom is not found in doing whatever we want.  
Freedom is found in knowing and obeying the truth.

#### **4. Liberty Becomes Freedom Because Someone Paid for It**

*"Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."* — 2 Corinthians 3:16–17 (NKJV)

When Jesus died on the cross:

*"Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom."* — Matthew 27:51 (NKJV)

The veil that separated man from God was removed.  
Through Christ we now have liberty—direct access to God's grace, mercy, forgiveness, and presence.

But that liberty was not free.

It cost Jesus everything.

- America's freedom cost the lives of brave men and women willing to die for others.
- Our eternal freedom cost the life of the Son of God.
- The difference is that we do not earn salvation.
- We do not have to carry a rifle, fly a fighter jet, sail a warship, or drive a tank.
- We simply receive God's gift through faith in Jesus Christ, confess our sins, repent, and follow Him.

#### **Final Thought**

**Nelson Mandela:** "For to be free is not merely to cast off one's chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others."

The greatest tyranny is not political. It is spiritual bondage.  
Every day God gives us liberty—the ability to choose.

Every day we choose between freedom and bondage, truth and deception, faith and fear, Christ or self.

The most important conversation you will have each day is the one you have with yourself

Over the last four months, I have experienced more freedom than at any other time in my life—not because my circumstances have improved, but because my relationship with God has deepened.

Even with the dark cloud of pancreatic cancer over me, I have found a peace that surpasses understanding. Through every challenge, I see God's love, faithfulness, and presence shining through.

I have learned that true freedom is not the absence of trials, but the presence of Christ in the middle of them. My body may be fighting cancer, but my spirit is at peace.

Today, I can honestly say that I am more free than I have ever been, because I have discovered that real freedom is found in Christ alone.