

Independence Day 2017

July 2, 2017

Psalm 119:45 NIV

I will walk in freedom, for I have devoted myself to your commandments.

By reviewing the events of the American Revolution lessons appear, which give hope to our own personal freedom at the spiritual level.

The struggle for freedom from anything, at any level, requires a deep commitment and willingness to persistently give our all without resignation. Independence requires us to face challenges with courage and determination, deeply rooted in the knowledge that beyond any question what we strive to attain is for our highest good.

To be free of bondage, empirical rule, addiction, fear, or anything else that enslaves us is a most precious commodity. The undertaking for freedom, however, not only comes with its costs but comes often in layers or pieces; parcels gained through meritorious effort, worthiness, and an abandoning of limiting and debilitating thinking.

The thirteen original colonies were British possessions, and prior to 1764 were fairly ignored by their mother country. But the costs of the French and Indian War ending in 1763, fought partially in order to protect the colonies, pressed heavily upon

Britain. In addition, 10,000 British troops remained in the colonies to help protect them from further Indian attacks.

The costs and debt Britain incurred on behalf of protecting and governing the colonies became insurmountable. The colonies were prospering and the British Parliament thought it justified to recoup some of their losses by imposing taxes upon the colonies, as they had upon all their other citizens.

The Revenue Act of 1764, (the Sugar Act) was imposed to garner money from the colonies. The Quartering Acts were enacted to force the colonies to pay for the quarters and provisions of the British soldiers staying in the colonies during peacetimes. The Stamp Act of 1765 placed a tax on everything printed and the Tea Act of 1773 maintained duties on the import of tea.

The Colonies resisted all of these Acts, and finally, in response to the Boston Tea Party, the Parliament levied the Intolerable Acts in 1774; their goals being to force the colonists to comply with British regulations. These were a series of Acts that closed ports, affected their local governments, allowed British royal officials to be sent back to Britain for trial, and expanded the Province of Quebec to infringe upon colonial lands. Consequently, the colonies established the First Continental Congress and tensions escalated.

The point I wish to make is that there was tension and unsettled disputes that led up to the Revolutionary War. There

were unacceptable demands that denied the colonists individual and social rights. Dialog did no good; logic, reason, and debate were useless. Something had to change, and the change came about by revolution - direct and absolute confrontation.

The colonists declared themselves independent and fought to establish that independence. On July 4, 1776 the Declaration of Independence was approved by the Continental Congress and signed probably on August 2, 1776. The war for the stated independence lasted until 1783 when the Treaty of Paris was signed.

And certainly this freedom was solely for a governing entity and not the freedom for all its individuals yet. Although we revere the words that appear 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 unalienable rights, that among those are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness...,” there are other words that had to be removed before this declaration would be adopted. South Carolina, North Carolina, and Georgia demanded that the following words by Thomas Jefferson be removed from the declaration: *“accusing the King of violating the rights of life and liberty of innocent people by exporting them to other hemispheres, where they were enslaved.”*

Those unalienable rights were not ready to be granted to all people. Although freedom was gained through the sweat and lives of black and white, men and women (Deborah Samson,

Rachel and Grace Martin, Margaret Corbin, Angelica Vrooman, and Mary Hagidorn), not all people were looked upon as worthy of the prize of individual freedom.

What we celebrate today is not the day our nation won the war against Great Britain, but the day on which the people came together to face their challenges and jointly claimed their independence. The war was still raging and would blaze for another seven years.

More war, effort, and growth were yet necessary. More lives needed to be sacrificed; more minds opened. More attitudes needed adjusting, and perhaps most importantly, a deeper spiritual awareness was necessary.

Although the Revolutionary War gained us National freedom, our social freedom began at the end of the Civil War, when on February 1, 1865 the 13th Amendment was signed into law, abolishing slavery in the United States.

The Women's Movement, which had started in 1848, grew as quickly as the American consciousness. On August 26, 1920 the 19th Amendment gave women the right to vote.

This victory came from the same qualities that our national independence and the racial independence sprang: dogged determination, unflagging effort, and the undeniable quest for what is right.

Struggles don't always have to be wars. Sometimes they show up as decisions and choices during conflict. Jesus experienced it when he said, "Get behind me Satan," and freed himself of the entrapments of ego. The disciples met challenges to simply stay awake with Jesus and pray, but they failed. Gandhi met his challenges with passivity and overcame the Empirical British to free his entire country.

Regardless of how they arrive challenges must be met to allow freedom to blossom. The chick must peck its way out of the shell to freedom. It is the struggle that gives it the energy to live. The same applies to the butterfly writhing to escape its cocoon. The very activity of bursting its bonds courses fluid through its wings enabling it to fly. Without the struggle, the chick and the butterfly die.

So it is with this nation. We struggled for freedom and it was the energy that we gained, and the attitude of self-direction that gave us the strength and awareness to face our social challenges. The importance of the struggle is not only the victory, but what we learn and become because of the effort.

And like our national freedoms, which we have gained over a protracted period of time, our social freedoms are slowly evolving as well. We have declared that 'all men are created equal', which we have rightly come to understand as all people – men and women – are created equal, and are endowed with certain unalienable rights. Yet in some parts of the country and within some social circles these battles still wage.

I believe it is just a matter of time when society looks upon every individual – black or white, Hispanic or Asian, gay or straight, young or old, literate or illiterate, wealthy or poor, healthy or ill – with the same respect and be given the same opportunities and rights in all circumstances within the private and public sectors. Every person has been endowed by the Creator with certain unalienable rights, and there will be a time when this is recognized and accepted, and not just declared.

But the declaration comes first. By declaring a thing, we make it real; we issue forth a proclamation for all to hear and know. Through declaration we garner the energies of God and Man, Self and Spirit to help achieve our acknowledged truth.

Declaration always precedes being. “Let there be light, and there was light.” Jesus thanked God before he performed his miracles. Declaration comes prior to the declared thing manifesting.

It is so with our own personal and spiritual independence. There will come a time when the events of the world, the stresses we allow into our minds and hearts, the fears and doubts that we harbor become intolerable. Within the ebb and flow of life our rampant egocentricities and self-centered decisions will eventually subside long enough for us to consider the consequences of our harmful actions and words, our destructive thoughts, and our self-serving attitudes.

I believe we must declare what it is that we want, not what we don't want. Our words are powerful allies or persuasive foes. With enough inner searching, struggle, and determined effort, during one of our quiet times with Christ we may even make our own spiritual declaration of independence: while my ego has served me well, I no longer look to it for guidance. My Life, Liberty and Happiness are not gained by anything "out there" in the physical world. My Source of all is Spirit, and I rely exclusively upon that inner Source, inner Strength, and inner Guidance.

Each of us may eventually uncover our spiritual strength and discover that we are beyond the reach of the physical world. That is true freedom; lasting freedom. We will know beyond all doubt that God, our Source and Creator, supplies all that we need. It will take commitment, persistence, and a willingness to surrender to Spirit everything that comes up: negative, positive, the painful, and the beneficial. Just as this great nation fought for its independence and continues to evolve into its fullest potential, we too will awaken to what and who we truly are – a beautiful, perfect, and beloved Child of God.

Let us pray....