



INDEPENDENCE DAY

I have always celebrated the Fourth of July as Independence Day since July 4, 1946, when the Philippines ceased being a commonwealth of the United States and became a free nation. The Republic of the Philippines later moved its celebration to June 12 (in honor of the First Republic that rebelled against Spain in 1898), but by that time I had immigrated to California and had already become a U. S. citizen. Thus, whenever I celebrate the Fourth of July, I remember that I owe a debt of gratitude for my freedom to the heroes of two countries.

I am thankful and proud that I'm a citizen of the United States of America, the most just and democratic country in all the world. Here, we all enjoy the basic human rights under our Constitution. We have very important rights, such as freedom of expression and freedom to exercise our own religion. But still, I am reminded every July 4th that "eternal vigilance is the price of liberty." The fight for freedom will always be a never-ending struggle. The achievement of our democratic ideals is never going to be totally complete.

I think about America celebrating Independence Day for the first ninety years of its existence, before hundreds of thousands of its people could be emancipated from slavery in 1865, after a bloody civil war. America then goes on for another one hundred years before all U. S. citizens could actually vote and be treated equally under the provisions of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, after a long struggle of awakening America's national conscience. Now, the 21st Century has brought new challenges to our constitutional rights as we protect America against the new threat of international terrorism. Freedom will never be something that is really free in this sinful world of ours. We must be ever vigilant and be prepared to fight for our liberty everywhere.

As we celebrate this year's Independence Day, let us thank God for the freedom that Jesus Christ purchased for all humanity at Calvary. God is so gracious that He purchased our freedom through the blood of His Son. And all our sins are forgiven (**Eph. 1:7**). Our freedom from condemnation and sin is based on the finished work of Christ. Unlike our struggle for political and socio-economic freedoms, which we must continually fight for, our freedom in Christ is a settled fact. We don't need to struggle and fight for it. Jesus has already gained the victory when He rose from the grave.

Because of Christ's finished work, believers are set free from guilt (**Rom. 3:24**) and the judgment of the law (**Rom. 8:1**).

Because of Christ's finished work, believers are set free from Adam's sin; they are now heirs of God's glory, together with Christ (**Rom. 8:17**).

Because of Christ's finished work, believers are set free from the sting of death; they have eternal life (**John 5:24**).

Because of Christ's finished work, believers are set free from the domination of their old sinful nature; they are now under the control of the Holy Spirit (**Rom. 8:9**).

Because of Christ's finished work, believers are set free from the kingdom of darkness; they now have power and authority to destroy the works of the devil (**Luke 10:19; Mark 16:17-18**).

Because of Christ's finished work, believers are set free from the limitations of the earth realm; they are now seated with Christ in the heavenly realms (**Eph. 2:6**).

Because of Christ's finished work, believers are set free from their old identity of slaves; they are now ambassadors of Christ (**2 Cor. 5:20**).

Because of Christ's finished work, believers are set free from fear and insecurity; they will never be separated from God's love in Christ Jesus (**Rom. 8:35-39**).

Jesus said, "*If the Son has set you free, you are free indeed.*" (**John 8:36**). If you think about it, we can celebrate Independence Day every day of the year. In the spiritual realm, we are truly free because Christ has set us free. We don't have to struggle and fight for freedom. Christ gives us freedom as His eternal gift.

Because of Christ's finished work, we have been set free! Let us stand strong for freedom! Let us not allow ourselves to be entangled again with the yoke of bondage of the law (**Gal. 5:1**). Let us celebrate our freedom with the Holy Spirit; for wherever the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty (**2 Cor. 3:17**).