

OUR INDEPENDENCE IN CHRIST

Sunday, July 3, 2011

Text: Acts 2:1-13

INTRODUCTION:

When we think of 4th of July, we immediately think about our independence as a Nation. And rightly so, for what we have in this country with all of it's problems and, yes, it's short comings, is still the greatest nation in the world.

But with freedom, which leads to independence comes a high price in terms of lives that have been lost to secure that freedom, and the over 200 years of a dependence upon the hand of God leading this nation. There are just a few historical facts that I would like to remind us of this morning.

1. In the summer of 1776, the Second Continental Congress was meeting in Philadelphia at the Pennsylvania State House (later called Independence Hall). On June 7, Richard Henry Lee of Virginia stood and read his resolution: "Resolved: That these United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent States, that they are absolved from all allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain is, and ought to be, totally dissolved."
2. The die was cast and on June 11, 1776, a committee was formed with the express purpose of drafting a document that would formally sever the ties of the colonies with Great Britain. The committee included Thomas Jefferson of Virginia, Benjamin Franklin of Pennsylvania, John Adams of Massachusetts, Roger Sherman of Connecticut, and Robert R. Livingstone of New York.
3. On July 1, Congress reconvened and the following day, the Lee Resolution for Independence was adopted by 12 of the 13 colonies. Immediately, Congress began to consider the Declaration drawn up by the committee. Then late in the afternoon of July 4, 1776 the document known as the Declaration of Independence was officially adopted as church bells rang out over Philadelphia.

4. On August 2, the Declaration of Independence, written on a sheet of parchment measuring 24 1/2 by 29 3/4 inches was signed by all the delegates in attendance, the first being John Hancock, the President of the Congress. He used a bold signature centered below the text and in accordance to the prevailing custom; the other delegates began to sign at the right below the text, their signatures arranged according to the geographical location of the states they represented. New Hampshire, the northernmost state, began the list, and Georgia, the southernmost, ended it.

5. That document, the Declaration of Independence, has become one of our nation's most cherished symbols of liberty. This coming Wednesday, July 4, we as American's celebrate "Independence Day." This year, we as a nation, celebrate 235 years of independence and freedom. As American's we have much to be thankful for and much to celebrate.

6. At the outset let me say that I am thankful and proud to be an American. I love America. I love my country. I am grateful to be an American. Let me be clear and say that I do not love everything about America. Yet, in spite of all its problems, I love my country.

But this morning there is an independence that is far greater, yes even far superior to the freedom and independence that we experience as Americans, that is our freedom and independence in Christ. That is essentially what happened on the Day of Pentecost, 50 days after the resurrection Christ. The culmination of the promises made by the Father and His Son, were now being fulfilled by the Holy Spirit. Power! The promise of supernatural power that can only be experienced through a relationship with Christ, and realized by the daily empowering work of the holy Spirit.

Paul reminded the Galatians of the importance, and the responsibility that comes with the liberty gained through Christ.

“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)

As we look at Acts Chapter 2 this morning, I want you to think in terms of your liberty, and independence that was won for you by Christ?

There are three important movements to what took place on the Day of Pentecost.

I. **FIRST WAS THE RELEASING OF GOD'S POWER! Vv.1-13**

[note] What were the elements that were necessary for the releasing of the power of the Spirit?

Illustration:

W. B. Anderson of India uttered a warning at a convention, against the theoretical knowledge of spiritual things: "Perhaps we never miss the morning devotional hour. We have whole passages of the Bible at our tongue's end. We have read widely in systems of theology. We have constructed a great system of truth for ourselves. We know all about the theory of prayer. We have become sure of these things with a certain knowledge." Yet, as the speaker declared, this may all be only a phantom with which we deceive ourselves. We may be spiritually powerless in the midst of this accumulated knowledge. For spiritual power consists not in mere knowledge, but comes only through the presence of a Person, Jesus Christ. Only as we yield to Christ and draw continually upon Him will He fill us and flow out from us in the fullness of the power of God. — Sunday School Times.

1. The people were of **one accord**, agreement. It literally means there unanimous agreement. **V.1**
2. There was the **promised presence** of God's Spirit. The Holy spirit showed up just like Jesus said He would. Acts 1:8 - **Vv.2,3**
3. They were **all filled** (influenced by what was being furnished to them). **V.4**
4. There **were witnesses** to what happened. **Vv.5-13**

II. SECOND WAS THE RELENTLESS PREACHING OF THE WORD!

Vv.14-36

Illustration:

The center of the preacher's message is always Christ. St. Bernard said that one Sabbath he preached himself, and all the scholars came forward to praise him. The next Sabbath he preached Christ, and all the sinners came up to thank him. To be worthy of the thanks of sinners, not the praise of men, is the ambition of the true minister.

On the northwest tower of St. Paul¹ in London hangs the great bell known as "Great Paul." The bell bears this inscription from the Vulgate (I Cor. 9:16) "Vae mihi si non evangelisavero"—"Woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!"

[note] Have you ever wondered why Peter's preaching was so powerful that day? Remember there would be 3000 conversions that one day!

1. First of all Peter was willing to ***stand up*** - V.14
2. Second he was willing to ***speak out*** - Vv.15
3. Third he was to ***spread the Word*** - Vv.16-36

III. THIRD WAS THE RESULTS OF PENTECOST! Vv.37-47

A preacher once approached C. H. Spurgeon and said: 'How do you account for the fact that though I preach the same gospel as you, I do not get anywhere near the same results?' Spurgeon replied: 'But you surely don't expect results every time you preach, do you?' 'O no,' answered the man. Then Spurgeon exclaimed: 'Then that is one reason why you don't get any!' The farmer who sows his seed in the spring, does so with every expectation of reaping in the fall. — Alfred P. Gibbs

5"For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance, as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake.

6 And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit,” (1 Thessalonians 1:5–6 NKJV)

1. People were willing to **listen**. **V.37**
2. **Repentance** was at the heart of the message. **V.38**
3. There was a **promise** from God. **V.39**
4. There was a **testimony** and continued **exhortation**. **V.40**
5. There was a willingness to **receive**. **V.41**
6. Then they **continued** steadfastly. **V.42**

CONCLUSION:

What conclusions can we draw from the events that took place that day in Jerusalem?

There was a healthy fear of the Lord that allowed for the moving of the Holy Spirit to bring forth signs and wonders. **V.43**

There was a willingness to let go of the world in order to embrace Christ. **Vv. 44-45**

Lastly, they **continued** (to earnestly move forward), with a **simplicity** (its the idea of smoothing off the rough edges of a stone), and there was **praising** of God and **favor** (resulting from a divine influence on their hearts) **Vv.46-47**

From this point forward God would be looking for a sincerity in the life of His newly birthed church.

In the Greek original of the New Testament the word used means 'judged in the sunlight'; and the English word is derived from the Latin — 'sine cera', which means 'without wax'. In the days when art flourished in ancient Greece, it was the common practice to repair with 'invisible' wax any vase or statue that had, as a result of carelessness or misadventure, been damaged.

A rich man or a person of high rank might employ a sculptor to chisel his bust in marble. Sometimes, if the chisel slipped, the end of the nose would be chipped off. Rather than go to all the trouble of making a new bust, the sculptor would so mend the features with wax that the flaw could not be detected unless by very close scrutiny, and palm off on the customer his

defective workmanship. If the client happened to be a knowing person, he would carry the finished statuette out of the studio into the open before paying for it, and examine it carefully in the sunlight: otherwise, in course of time, he would have the chagrin of seeing the nose drop off his statuette in the heated room of his house. The statue was not `sincere', not 'without wax', and could not bear careful scrutiny in the sunlight.

“For we are not, as so many, peddling the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as from God, we speak in the sight of God in Christ.” (2 Corinthians 2:17 NKJV)

“that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ,” (Philippians 1:10 NKJV)

For the early church, there was true freedom and independence in Christ through the empowering work of the Holy Spirit.