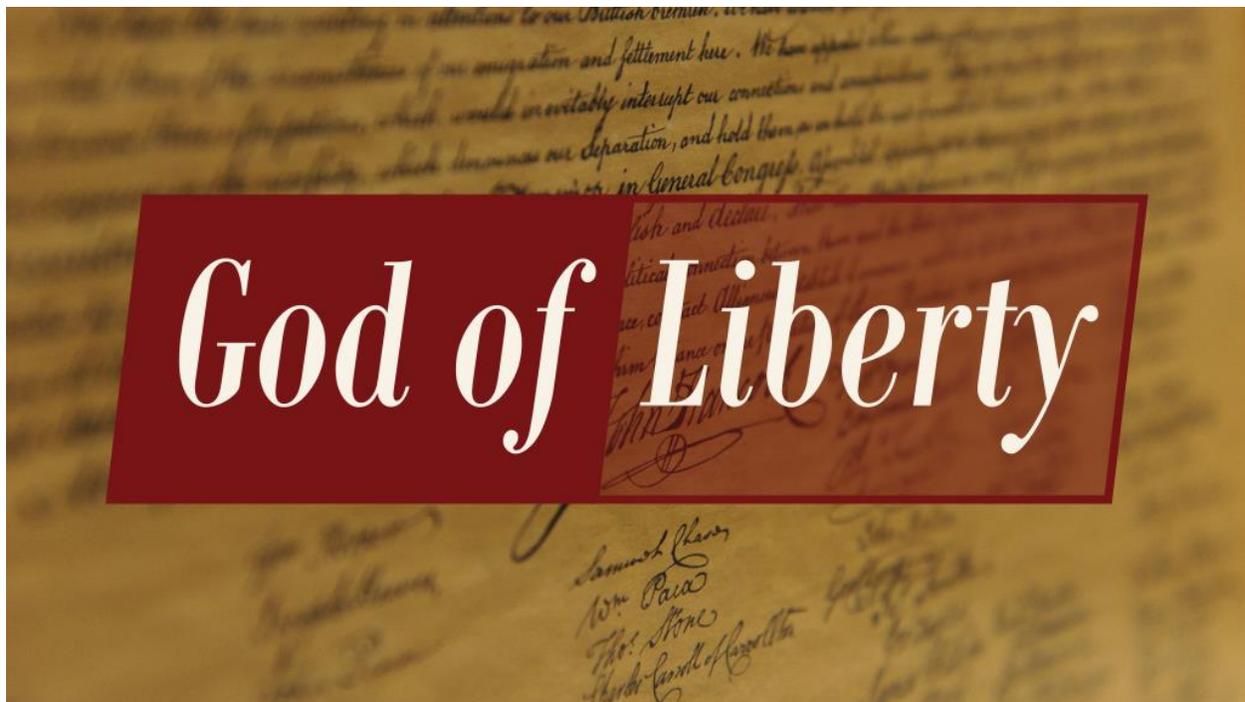


GOD OF LIBERTY*

God is the giver of true freedom. Submission to the Master sets us free to live lives of service to others.

SCRIPTURE†	MUSIC‡
Isaiah 61:1-3 Jeremiah 34:8-16 John 8:34-36 Romans 8:18-25 1 Corinthians 8:1-13 Galatians 5:1-6 Galatians 5:13-14 Galatians 5:7-16 1 Peter 2:13-17	And Can It Be At the Cross Come, Behold the Wondrous Mystery Free From Guilt & Free from Sin (Hall) SATB Just as I Am Made Me Free (arr. Danner) SATB My Heart Is Filled with Thankfulness My Heart Is Filled with Thankfulness (Getty) O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing O How He Loves You and Me Redeemed Since I Have Been Redeemed There Is a Redeemer



NORTHWEST VALLEY BAPTIST CHURCH

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* Theme corresponds well to the Sunday nearest **Independence Day**.

† Daily preparatory readings shown in **bold**.

‡ Published choral and vocal music shown in **bold**.

PRESENTING & PROMOTING THIS THEME

FREEDOM TO LIVE RIGHTLY

In the Declaration of Independence, America's founding fathers asserted that all people are given certain rights by their Creator: life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. We understand that life is sacred because it is given by God and is not ours to bestow or to destroy. But if "liberty" and "the pursuit of happiness" are God-given rights, then we ought to understand what kind of liberty and happiness our founders had in mind. John Locke (from who Jefferson borrowed the "pursuit of happiness" idea) argued that pursuing happiness is a contrast to (not the same as) pursuing selfish or sinful desires. Our founding fathers were seeking to give Americans the freedom to live righteously. This echoes Paul's teaching in Galatians 5: liberty is not for the purpose of serving myself, but for the purpose of serving others. My liberty should be used as an opportunity to love my neighbor as myself.

RESPONSIBLE FREEDOM

Isaiah 61:1; Galatians 5:1 | *What does biblical liberty truly mean? The founders of our country envisioned a liberty that was responsible freedom, not lawless freedom. (Perhaps include a quote about the nature of liberty from one of the founding fathers.) They focused on freedom from slavery or serfdom, and they protected the rights of the people to adjust laws. Much of what is called freedom today is not what the founders had in mind; the idea of liberty being each person's doing whatever he or she wants was foreign to them. In the New Testament, the Apostle Paul warned against false freedom. True biblical liberty is freedom from sin, from our own wrong desires. It is the ability to give ourselves freely to God and freely serve others.*

Isaiah 61:1 says this: "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." In Luke 4, Jesus opens up to this passage and then tells the people that He is the fulfillment of it. He has arrived to bring liberty!

But what does biblical liberty truly mean? One of my hobbies is to read biographies of the founders. Whatever else they thought, it is clear from their own words that they envisioned a liberty that was responsible freedom, not lawless freedom. They focused on freedom from slavery or serfdom, and they protected the rights of the people to adjust laws. Much of what is called freedom today is not what the founders had in mind; the idea of liberty being each person's doing whatever he or she wants was foreign to them.

In the New Testament, the Apostle Paul warned against false freedom. True biblical liberty is freedom from sin, from our own wrong desires. It is the ability to give ourselves freely to God and freely serve others.

Today, we worship the God of true liberty, and we join with the apostle Paul in standing fast in the liberty by which Christ has made us free! (James Tilson)