



The Trinity Pulpit



Inalienable Rights

I Corinthians 9:19-23

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When in the Course of human events it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

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 these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. — That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, — That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shewn that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security. — Such has been the patient sufferance of these Colonies; and such is now the necessity which constrains them to alter their former Systems of Government. The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States.

These are the words from the introduction and the preamble of the *Declaration of Independence* that was signed on July 4, 1776, by our forefathers. After being under what the forefathers considered “absolute Tyranny,” the leaders of the thirteen colonies got together and essentially said, “Enough is enough.” People in the colonies desired the inalienable rights that the leaders stated in the Preamble: “Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness”.

Because of the courage of our forefathers, we enjoy the freedoms that we have today in the United States. Not only are those freedoms extended to those who have been privileged to be born in this country, but it is also afforded to those who seek the same sort of freedoms in a country that originated as a “Melting Pot”. Many around the world seek to gain entrance into this nation to pursue the “American Dream” and to enjoy the inalienable rights that were noted in the *Declaration of Independence*.

I stand before you today because of the *Declaration of Independence* and the efforts of many who have come before me to make America what it is today. My father came from Seoul, South Korea, to the United States in 1974, looking for the opportunity of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. His story began much like many who come to America as immigrants. With hopes and dreams of making a new life for himself and his family, he landed in New York City with just enough money to last him for a few weeks. His intent was to scout out a way to make a living and to become established, in order to bring the rest of his family half-way across the world. The few weeks turned into a few months, and eventually, it became a few years. He did whatever work he could do to make a living, including being a street vendor in New York City, a watch repairman, and many other odd jobs. He moved from job to job, saving as much as he could in the process, while making his way down the eastern seaboard.

By the time he had saved enough money to start a

business of his own, he landed in Sanford, NC: a place where he felt he could succeed. At that time, he made a journey back to Korea to make preparations to bring his family to America. As you can imagine, the six-year separation in his marriage led to a divorce. My father then remarried, and he brought his newly formed family to this foreign land. My stepmother, stepbrother, biological older brother and I settled in Sanford, not knowing a single word of the English language.

My father and stepmother worked tirelessly to expand what started as a wig shop, in downtown Sanford, to a one-stop shopping store for many teenagers and young adults in the surrounding area. At its height, one could purchase casual clothes, shoes, jewelry, perfume, suits and, of course, wigs. If it could turn a dollar, my father sold it!

Many years later, a second store was opened in Spring Lake, near Fort Bragg, and a wholesale clothing company was created by my dad. He was a true entrepreneur and could turn a penny into many dollars. The inalienable rights that our forefathers established afforded my father the opportunity to create a better life for himself and especially for his family.

Because of the sacrifices my father made to provide for his family financially, I was able to enjoy the “American Dream.” I never lacked for a roof over my head, clothes on my back or food in my stomach. Even better, I hardly lacked for any of my wants. Though my father was careful to teach me the life lesson of hard work and the value of a dollar, I grew up with many amenities for which most people do not have an opportunity.

The inalienable rights allowed me to receive a great education and gave me the freedom to live a privileged life. It gave me the freedom to choose my own religion, which has led me to stand behind this pulpit. As a first generation immigrant to the United States, I am forever grateful for this nation. I recognize the sacrifices that had to be made by so many to provide the freedom that I enjoy each day. I am proud to be a citizen of this great nation and to call America home.

However, as great as our nation may be, as Christians, we are citizens of a greater nation. We are citizens of the Kingdom of God. Does our citizenship in the Kingdom of God afford us some inalienable rights? I dare say no! As humans, full of sin, we are not entitled to anything but death. We are slaves to sin and should spend eternity in Hell. We should have no freedoms, no hope, no joy and no love. We do not deserve anything!

However, because of God’s infinite love for his creation,

John 3:16 became a reality: “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son for whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” We were given true Life, true liberty and a true pursuit of happiness. Through Christ’s ultimate sacrifice on the cross, God freed us from our slavery to sin and gave us true freedom.

In 1 Corinthians 9:19-23, Paul reminded Christians in Corinth that we are all free to make choices in Christ. However, Paul chose to put away his own desires and to put on humility in order to preach Christ to those around. To the Jews, Paul became like the Jews in order to win them for Christ. To those who stuck to the law, he followed the law to win the right to share the message of Christ. To the weak, Paul became like the weak. In other words, Paul did whatever it took to take the message of the Gospel to the lost. Though Paul was free, he chose to exercise his freedom by choosing to submit himself to the authority of others, in order to win an opportunity to speak of his citizenship in the Kingdom of God.

How will you choose to exercise your freedom today? How will you choose to exercise the freedom we have in Christ? Let me suggest that we can exercise our freedom to love, our freedom to trust and our freedom to choose.



*“We are
citizens
of the
Kingdom of God.”*

Our connection to our Savior is based on a love relationship. It is not tied to rules or a “to do” list. It is based on God’s eternal decision to have a relationship with His creation and our decision to return that love back to Him. What a beautiful picture of love!

Do you remember the gripping scene in the animated Disney film, *Beauty and the Beast*, when the Beast was about to confess his love to Belle? Cogsworth, the enchanted little clock, looked on with euphoric anticipation, to see if Belle would pledge her love to the Beast. If she did, presto! Then the spell that had hung over the castle like a dark, dank cloud of doom would finally be broken.

As she clasped hands with the Beast, Belle asked permission to gaze into the magical mirror in order to see her father. Viewing her father in obvious distress, she dropped the mirror and gasped at his plight. “I’ve got to go to him,” she sobbed.

“Go to him, then,” the Beast responded. Those four words spoke volumes.

Cogsworth later walked into the room with an air of triumphant expectancy as he declared to the Beast, “I must say that things are going swimmingly.”

All hope vanished into thin air, however, when the Beast uttered the most significant line in the film. "I let her go," he confessed to Cogsworth.

As the reality of those words sunk in, Cogsworth shook himself and asked, "You did what?"

Can you imagine the impact of the Beast's admission?

To let her go was to plunge his kingdom into another season of a cursed existence. To let her go meant that all hope was lost of ever becoming normally human again. To let her go meant that he forfeited his last, best chance of ever being loved. But he let her go. Why?

"I had to," he said. "I love her." The Beast understood that a lover does not hold the object of his love hostage to his possessive grasp.

In the same way, God loved us too much to not give us the freedom to love Him back. He did not want to hold us hostage. We have the freedom to be in this love relationship with our Lord! There is no greater freedom!

We also have the freedom to trust God. In John 14, Christ tells His disciples, "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going."

Our Lord is trustworthy. We can put our faith and our trust in God and in Christ. So, what does putting trust in God mean? It means letting go!

It means letting go of our own hopes and dreams for our lives and taking hold of a greater hope and a greater dream. It means letting go of control and allowing God to hold the reins of your life.

A man named Jack was walking along a steep cliff one day when he accidentally got too close to the edge and fell. On the way down he grabbed a branch, which temporarily stopped his fall. He looked down and to his horror saw that the canyon fell straight down for more than a thousand feet. He couldn't hang onto the branch forever, and there was no way for him to climb up the steep wall of the cliff.

So Jack began yelling for help, hoping that someone

passing by would hear him and lower a rope or something. "Help! Help! Is anyone up there? Help!" He yelled for hours, but no one heard him. He was about to give up when he heard a voice.

"Jack. Jack. Can you hear me?"

"Yes, yes! I can hear you. I'm down here!"

"I can see you, Jack. Are you all right?"

"Yes, but...who are you, and where are you?"

"I am the Lord, Jack. I'm everywhere."

"The Lord? You mean, God?"

"That's me."

"God, please help me! I promise—if you'll get me down from here, I'll stop sinning. I'll be a really good person. I'll serve you for the rest of my life."

"Easy on the promises, Jack. Let's just get you down from there; then we can talk. Now, here's what I want you to do. Listen carefully."

"I'll do anything, Lord. Just tell me what to do."

"Okay. Let go of the branch."


"What?"

"I said, let go of the branch. Just trust me. Let go."

There was a long silence. Finally Jack yelled, "Help! Help! Is anyone else up there?"

Of all people, I am one who would rather have control. Just ask the students, and they will quickly tell you that I can be a control freak. I like to be in control to make sure that things go as planned. However, God often reminds me that I am really not in control at all, and I must freely surrender control over to God and simply trust in our Lord.

Finally, we have the freedom to choose in Christ. Many of us have the wrong perception of God. Many of us think that God is in heaven pulling the strings and controlling everything that happens. I don't believe that God is a puppet master in the sky pulling all of our strings. Because of God's infinite love for us, He has given us the freedom to choose. We have the freedom to make



***“ Through
Christ’s
ultimate sacrifice
on the cross,
God freed us
from our slavery
to sin and
gave us
true freedom.”***

good choices or to even make bad choices in life. God isn't going to stop us from making poor choices.

It takes the love of our Heavenly Father to allow us to fail and make poor choices. God is disappointed and even hurt when we choose our ways instead of His ways. However, His love is unchanging. There is nothing we can do to make Him love us any more or any less. More the reason to choose Christ over the ways of the world!

Freedom is one of the greatest gifts God has given us. Freedoms we have in America are something to be cherished. Those who have fought for our freedom should be honored and revered. However, our freedom in Christ is an even greater gift. We have the freedom to love, to trust and to choose. May we love God. May we trust Christ. May we choose the ways of our Lord. May we freely choose to give up our freedom to serve the needs of others around us in order that the message of the Gospel is spread to all! ❖



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