

The Price of Freedom is Sacrificial Love

So Christ has truly set us free. Now make sure that you stay free, and don't get tied up again in slavery to the law. . . What is important is faith expressing itself in love. . . For you have been called to live in freedom, my brothers and sisters. But don't use your freedom to satisfy your sinful nature. Instead, use your freedom to serve one another in love. For the whole law can be summed up in this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Galatians 5:1, 6, 13-14 NLT).

The 4th of July commemorates the birth of America. The labor pains of that birth are well known in history. Liberty came at a deep cost of the lives of those who fought for it. Freedom is not free. Someone has to be willing to pay the price to obtain it. William Wallace is known for his battle cry "Freedom!" in leading Scots to fight for their families and lands. Patrick Henry is remembered for his speech to America's Continental Congress, "Give me liberty or give me death!" The heroes of the Alamo knew that they were sacrificing their lives for the hope of freedom. Many others through the ages have recognized that freedom might call for the ultimate sacrifice of their lives.

Keeping America free has also been very costly. What still compels young men and women to continue to do whatever is necessary to maintain America's freedom? Love does. America's military is peopled by volunteers. Without love of country, family and for many, love of God, there would be no defense forces to protect my home country. I am indebted to my father, my husband's father, my sons, neighbors and many friends who have served and are serving in any branch of the military that keeps watch over my privilege to live in "the land of the free." I have never volunteered to serve myself, so with a grateful heart, I thank each one for the blessing they have bought for me.

Our spiritual freedom was purchased for us by Jesus. After sin entered the world, a war began. Since then, man has been in a continual battle against Satan and his desire to keep us in bondage to sin. Jesus voluntarily paid the price for man to be reconciled to God through His own death on the cross. God's great love for us and His desire for us to be free cost Him dearly.

The battle has been won. Our freedom has been purchased for eternity, but many times we do not live like it. Although certain that we are saved by grace, we often try to live by works. The result of that is a return to the Satan's bondage. Paul told the churches in Galatia that the remedy for that was to serve one another, remembering that the law is summed up in *love your neighbor as yourself*.

Christians owe an eternal debt to Christ for our spiritual freedom. Americans owe a debt to our service personnel for our freedom. We cannot pay off that debt. It is not possible to go to Heaven through our own works, nor is it possible to bring back those

who have sacrificed themselves for our country's freedom. The proper response to both is love. *"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength." This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself"* (Mark 12:30-31 NKJV).

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