

## You Call That Freedom?

Today, we celebrate the independence of our great nation. Our pledge to the flag ends by saying, "With liberty and justice for all!" We sing patriotic songs with lyrics such as "Land of the free and the home of the brave!" and "God bless America, my home sweet home." Yet, many Americans take their independence and liberty for granted, using it instead to curse and rebel against the very country that gives them their "blood bought" freedom.

Our freedom to practice religion, assemble for worship, and the ability to possess, read and discuss God's word are the greatest of blessings, yet so many choose not to practice their faith. What if the confession of Christ and the exercise of the "*law of Liberty*" could cause you to be arrested and land you in prison? How many of us would really stand up for what we believe and hold dear?

As we read the letters of Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon and Hebrews, we find similar phrases from the author(s) as, "*in my chains*". This would indicate that the author of these inspired words was either incarcerated or had spent time in prison for the gospel's sake. In many of his letters, Paul called himself "*the prisoner of the Lord*" and the Hebrew writer encouraged his readers to, "*Remember the prisoners as if chained with them those who are mistreated since you yourselves are in the body also.*" (Heb. 13:3). However, the scriptures tell us that "*Christ has made us free*" (Rom. 8:2; Gal. 5:1). So how can I be free in Christ and a prisoner of the Lord at the same time? You call that freedom?

When we obey the gospel by making the "good confession" and putting on Christ in baptism, we become "*slaves of righteousness*" (Rom. 6:18) and commit to a life-long service to God (Rev. 2:10). For many patriotic American Christians, the thought of being a slave of any kind is offensive, including being a servant to the Lord. Thus, many practice a pseudo-religion that requires no sacrifice and does not encroach upon their personal freedoms.

Even though we live in the land of the free, we should embrace the opportunity to serve our Lord. I pray that America stays free for many generations to come and that God will continue to bless "the land that I love".

*Jay Launius - 2021*