



LWML CNH CHRISTIAN LIFE LINE

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Free To Live!

When you think about July 4th, what comes to mind? Perhaps you think about a day off from work with picnics, fireworks, and those red, white, and blue flags displayed in front yards along your neighborhood. During these times, it's family time, a bbq!

This is all good, but the one word that comes to my mind is freedom. It is a fact that we live in the United States of America where we can voice our opinions freely and can vote for the people of our choice. These are very good reasons why we should never take our freedom for granted.

Each year, some people really go all out decorating for this and every holiday – lots of red, white, and blue. The flag reminds us of family and friends who have served in wars, and some who have not come home. The American flag is placed on graves of our honored dead who fought for us to remain a free nation, and it flies high during times of peace, as well as war. "Old Glory" is its name.

There is another real freedom we can have. We can display it every day of the year, and that is our freedom "In Christ" to live a life to glorify Him, so that His banner of love, truth, and peace can be seen by all. It is a flag flown high in the castle of my heart. We can be free in our spirit to serve the Creator of the whole universe and that is True Freedom.

*For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus
from the law of sin and death. Romans 8:2*

Just like the flag that represents freedom, Jesus is a banner over us, protecting and shielding us. He is the "Glory and the Lifter of our heads" at all times. Let freedom ring out in your heart today.

*But you, O Lord, are a shield about me, my glory, and the lifter of my head.
Psalm 3:3*

Freedom through death seems an unlikely combination, but it is true for the Christian. We enter this world as slaves of the sinful nature and we cannot free ourselves from it. Furthermore, we deserve death because of our sins. Paul writes in Romans 6:23, *For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.* God warned Adam and Eve in Genesis 2:17, *but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.* They did eat, they spiritually died, and later they physically died. When we came into the world, we entered it physically dead and slaves to sin.

We yearn for freedom from the sinful nature, but there is no freedom without death. Only the death of Jesus Christ on the cross sets us free. Jesus was conceived in the womb of Mary without sin and He was not deserving of death when He submitted to death on the cross as our substitute. He willingly took our sins on Himself as if He was a slave to sin, but He never sinned. Rather, out of His great love for the world, He became sin for us, received our punishment, and died. His death sets us free from sin and the sinful nature; His resurrection from the dead gives us life.

Through the waters of Baptism, we die with Christ; through His resurrection from the dead, we rise to live with and for Christ. Paul concludes for us in Romans 6:7, *For one who has died has been set free from sin.* However, although we are alive with Christ, we are not yet free from the effects of our sinful nature. That's why Paul can write in Romans 8:22-23: *For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.* We don't yet look like what Christ made us to be. While we are spiritually set free in Christ, we still carry in our weak bodies the effects of Adam and Eve's disobedience.

Only through death are we finally set free to live. That's why so many Christians in their last days are ready to leave this life and be with Jesus. They feel the weakness of the body, they've fought the good fight of faith, and they yearn for the freedom that awaits them in Christ. Suddenly, Christ's response to the repentant thief on the cross becomes very real and personal to them when they remember His words, as if He were speaking to them, *And he said to him, Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise.* (Luke 23:43). When we die, then we are finally set free from the sinful nature – free to live!

Dear Heavenly Father, although we sin and deserve only death, You redeemed us through Your Son and opened up life for us with You in heaven. Keep us and our loved ones always in this Christian faith until You call us to the eternal life You prepared for us in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Scripture references are from the ESV.
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