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Lakeland Hills Leader

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LIBERTY

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It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery. (Galatians 5:1 NASB95)

James McHenry (1753-1816), a Maryland delegate to the Constitutional Convention. On the page where McHenry records the events of the last day of the convention, September 18, 1787, he wrote: "A lady asked Dr. Franklin, 'Well Doctor, what have we got: a republic or a monarchy?' – 'A republic.' replied the Doctor. 'If you can keep it.'" Then McHenry added: "The Lady here alluded to was Mrs. Powel of Philada.(*Philadelphia*)" The journal is at the Manuscript Division of the Library of Congress.

Benjamin Franklin's proclamation is truth in all sincerity, in liberties granted from men. Our liberties enshrined in the Declaration of Independence are 246 years old, and the Constitution of the United States of America is 233 years old, with half the nation continuing without much thought, as if our freedoms are permanent, and the other half fervently wanting to abolish those documents that enshrine those liberties. It is my opinion we will have a gradual, howbeit, progressive erosion, of our liberties which by nature will make the documents codefying those liberties we enjoy, not worth the paper their written on. So, what then? All is not bleak because the rights I enjoy in this life even if I enjoy them for a lifetime, are temporary. My liberty in Christ is eternal because man cannot nullify the liberty He grants.

Since Christ sets us free (Gal. 5:1), let us rejoice that no one can take them away. The bedrock of this freedom is the Divine's protection of my freedom in Him, which is expressed with words describing an impenetrable fortress (Rom. 8:28-39). Jesus said it this way: *I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven."* Then He warned the disciples that they should tell no one that He was the Christ. (Mat. 16:18,19)

But I would be remiss if I didn't remind us that we can return to slavery, and thus lose all the benefits of the liberty God granted through His Son (Gal. 5:1). Paul says that we exercise faith in love to remain free (Gal. 5:6). Faith is the system of belief that requires deeds of obedience (Jam. 1:21-27). These works of faith (Jam. 2:14-18) are not in order to make sure we keep our liberty, but a manifestation of our desire to please the one who loves us in spite of our unworthiness (John 3:16; 2Cor. 10:18; Rom. 6:16-18). *But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation. (Rom. 5:8-11)*

Therefore, I was not worthy of freedom, but God desired to give me freedom anyway, if I would accept it (Col. 1:13,14). So, why won't many accept it? Well, many people like slavery (Rom. 8:15; 6:16,20), and because they have dark desires, they will make themselves the enemies of God (Eph. 6:12). So not all people want eternal freedom, but do you? What if we do lose our temporal freedoms? Do we really lose? (Phil. 3:7,8) On this anniversary of the mortal freedom of the ages, can I urge you to consider the eternal liberty God provides through His Son Jesus the Christ? And if you enjoy liberty in Christ, don't use it for the desires of the flesh, *"but through love serve one another"*. (Gal. 5:13)

Consider these things this 4th of July, as you celebrate the freedoms of this nation.