

“Free Life”

Scripture: Colossians 1:1-14

Graphics: freedom, fireworks

Big Truth: The people of the PUMC will give thanks for the freedom we have in Christ, which is greater than the freedom we have in our country. The free life in Christ has hope, is worthy of the Lord, is bold, patient, joyful, and forgiven. In Christ, we have a free life to love, hope, and believe.

Focus Phrase: My free life in Christ is love-powered, hope-focused, and faith-filled.

1. Scripture

A. READ Colossians 1:1-14

2. Introduction

- A. When I was growing up, my family went camping just about every July 4th weekend. I'm sure lots of people have or are doing the same. Shout out to the campers who are worshipping around a smoldering fire this morning!
- B. My family went to a small campground without many amenities, since that's what we could afford, I suppose. We slept in tents or an old canvas pop-up trailer. We'd have breakfast by the campfire, stay up too late, and be dirty for days. It was glorious!
- C. But the one thing I remember on those weekends was the fireworks display. Now, most memorable fireworks displays have 20...30 minutes of fireworks, intensifying as they go, ending in an amazing finale that fills you with awe, shakes your innards, and makes dogs run for cover.
- D. That was NOT what was memorable about the fireworks displays at that particular campground of my youth. In fact, the reason they were so memorable year after year was because of how SIMPLE they were.
- E. How simple were they? I'm glad you asked. They were SO simple that they only had one or two styles of fireworks, shot off every 20 seconds or so, most of them were white, and there was no finale. Now, I'm sure it was what the campground could afford or felt comfortable using. But, they were so simple that my dad, who could whistle super loudly, would add sound effects to each firework in order to increase the amount of enjoyment for those watching.
- F. We probably could have found a flashy expensive firework display somewhere near by our campground. Yet, having us all together, laughing and enjoying ourselves as a family, and feeling like there was no place better to be, was exactly what we needed, as we celebrated Independence Day each year.
- G. Now, you may be asking what this has to do with the scripture for today we read or even about our faith in Jesus.
- H. Well, in Paul's letter to the Colossians, he gave a simple yet profound picture of what the Christian life is like when it has freedom in Christ! Flashy

fireworks displays - like the flashy freedom the world tries to offer - won't satisfy the deeper desire for true freedom. The simple everlasting freedom that comes in Christ is all we need.

- I. This first part of Paul's letter to the Colossians has this focus: **My free life in Christ is love-powered, hope-focused, and faith-filled.**

3. Scripture

- A. The Apostle Paul wrote this letter to the followers of Jesus in Colossae in order to do two things: (1) to give thanks for them and their faithfulness to the gospel; and (2) to encourage them to keep growing in and living the Free Life in Christ. This message is called Free Life!
- B. Paul wrote to these believers because he'd heard awesome things from Epaphras, who was the founder of the church in Colossae and who was a friend of Paul's.
- C. Colossae was a city on a major roadway in Asia Minor, a part of the Roman Empire that now lies in modern Turkey. The Colossians were familiar with Greek and Roman philosophy, and may have been influenced by Jewish mysticism. There were a lot of schools of thought in Colossae. The people were being pulled in many different directions, just as we are today by a variety of issues. Let's just say there were lots of fireworks displays going on in that city and they were navigating which ones were the important ones.
- D. Paul gave thanks to God for their faithfulness to Jesus and their love for all the saints. (verse 4) They were doing well!
- E. Their faith in Jesus and their love for others was because they had hope! (verse 5) We know that when Paul wrote to the Corinthian Church he said that faith, hope, and love were the big three. My favorite firework is the flash, bang, boom. You know that one, right? The rocket goes up, there's a huge flash, followed by a bang, and then a second later, you get the BOOM! For Paul, faith, hope, and love were the flash, bang, BOOM of the Christian life. If you had faith, hope, and love, you understood the gospel of Jesus.
- F. The Colossians were growing in those three areas because they understood the truth - that Jesus was born of a virgin to fulfill dozens of OT prophecies, that he showed them God the Father, that he was crucified as a sacrifice for sin's penalty, that he rose again to prove that death was defeated, and he ascended back to heaven to reign as our King. That's the gospel! They got it! Do you got it?
- G. The Colossians could've been bogged down in all the different schools of thought, religions, politics, disagreements, and darkness around them. Yet, they kept their eyes on the gospel. And as they did, they found freedom from the world around them!

- H. Paul expressed the outcome of their faith, hope, and love in verse 10, "...so that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, as you bear fruit in every good work and as you grow in the knowledge of God."
- I. The Colossians knew that they COULD and were tempted to be distracted by all the things that darkened the world and every vice and argument about this or that. Those things only lead to being a captive to the world.
- J. But **they were focused on the truth** and the things that mattered to Jesus - walking like Jesus, being like Jesus, being FILLED with the presence of Jesus, and bearing fruit - love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.
- K. The Colossians knew that when they were bearing fruit, that was evidence that they were living the Free Life.
- L. Paul prayed
 - i. that they would be strong...with the strength that comes from God's glorious power.
 - ii. He prayed that the Colossians would be prepared to endure everything with patience.
 - iii. He prayed that they would joyfully give thanks to God, even in the midst of the trials, giving thanks to God.
 - iv. He prayed that they would know that God had enabled them to be heirs to the Kingdom of God with Jesus.
 - v. He prayed they would know that they were rescued from any power that darkness and evil had over them...
 - vi. and they'd been transferred from this world into Jesus' kingdom!
- M. And that as citizens of the Kingdom of God, they were redeemed by Jesus' blood and forgiven of ALL their sin.
- N. There's SO MUCH in this opening to this letter. We can't talk about it all, but let's see what Paul is telling US today on this Independence Weekend, sitting here in worship.

4. Application

- A. Church, it starts here: **Faithful followers of Jesus are given everlasting Free Life in Christ!**
- B. That isn't like getting an extra life in a video game. It's experiencing the freedom to live life like Jesus...forever.
- C. So often, though, we're tempted to settle for something far less. We engage in worldly arguments. We rely on Supreme Court and Judicial Council rulings. We argue about politics and social injustices. We lament gas prices and food

prices and inflation. All of those things have an impact on our lives to one degree or another, for sure, and sometimes we need to get “into it” in order to help solve those issues.

- D. Yet, what those pursuits do, in reality, is enslave us to this world. Satan’s one goal to keep us from the Free Life in Christ. Satan would like nothing more than for you and me to stay embroiled in the fights with the powers of this world and never live the Free Life we **already have** in Christ.
- E. In this country, we have lots of freedoms. And we’re thankful for those. They can be a lot like fireworks displays.
 - i. Some are flashy like the freedom of speech and the freedom of religion.
 - ii. Others are more subtle like the freedom to live where you want and the freedom to work where you want.
 - iii. Then, there are the freedoms that are more like the fireworks at the campground. The freedom to simply walk down the street or the freedom to buy the brands I want at the grocery store. Simple - some might say boring - but true.
- F. And yet, all the freedoms we have in this country pale in comparison to the **free life** we have in Christ, which is available to every person of every country.
- G. We can be thankful for the freedom we have because we’re citizens in a particular country. However, the free life God gives us because of the sacrifice of Jesus not only causes gratitude, but invites each one of us to give our lives to Christ - every part of our lives.
- H. Sometimes, what we do for Christ is flashy. Most of the time, our free life is simply living for Christ every day!
- I. Let’s let Paul show us what the Free Life looks like. Is there something in this list that you want more of?
 - i. First, the Free Life in Christ is **filled with hope!** Hope is described as applying a future reality to today. Jesus has promised an everlasting future in God’s presence. We hope today because we’re assured of that future! How’s your level of hope? Not in the world but in the kingdom to come...
 - ii. Second, the Free Life is **lived worthy of the Lord.** Jesus’ life is the benchmark for OUR lives...the pages of scripture are filled with some of the narrative of Jesus’ life - how he loved and what he did and taught. The Holy Spirit fills you so that you can live a life worthy of Jesus and his life. Would you describe your life as worthy of Jesus? He wants you to...
 - iii. The Free Life in Christ is also **strong and bold** for the truth about Jesus. You and I tend, sometimes (often?), to be shy or reserved in our faith. Yet, the glorious power of God is not only around us, but is IN YOU and ME. If you’re filled with that power, then Jesus wants to witness through you.

Nothing in this world can stop Jesus and His mission. So why do we fear? The Free Life is bold and strong to speak the name of Jesus.

- iv. The Free Life is **patient in enduring everything**. We all have trials - physical, spiritual, emotional, relational. We don't always see the way through it, but the Free Life, lived with trust that God is still working, allows you to endure patiently in EVERYTHING. How's your patience these days?
- v. Here's my favorite one, and the one I wish I had more of, is that the Free Life is **filled with joy!** Psalm 30:5 says, "Weeping may linger for the night, but joy comes with the morning." As you live the Free Life in Christ, joy isn't a fleeting emotion, but an ever-present fire burning in your soul. Do you desire more joy? Be free to live with joy!
- vi. Finally, the Free Life is **redeemed and forgiven**. Jesus' sacrifice on the cross was not insufficient. By that I mean, belief in the power of His death and resurrection are all we need to be saved...to be redeemed and forgiven of our sin. So, whatever mistakes or willful sin you've done...and the guilt that you've been carrying...lay it all down at the foot of the cross today.
- vii. **The Free Life begins at the foot of the cross and goes on through this life and for everlasting life.**

J. **My free life in Christ is love-powered, hope-focused, and faith-filled.**

5. Conclusion

- A. The freedom with nation offers us is significant, but it is temporary and limited to our citizenship in it. The freedom we have in Christ allows us to not be free from getting stuck in the worries, need to be right, and struggles of this life.
- B. The Free Life in Christ bears fruit for Jesus as we faithfully, lovingly, and with hope, live for Him.
- C. I pray you get out somewhere to see some fireworks this weekend. As you do, for every one that explodes, let it remind you of not only your freedom as a citizen, but the call to a free life in Jesus Christ.
- D. As each firework explodes, name them - hope, strength, godly life, patience, joy, forgiveness, and redemption. Faith, hope, and love.
- E. Maybe you can add to the list, characteristics of the free life in Christ.
- F. **Let's pray...**