

## Freedom in the Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:17)



The world stops in July to celebrate the birth of America as a nation. In 1776, this young country gained its freedom from its mother country, England. The freedom theme and spirit are evident from the celebrations, the family gatherings and cookouts, the waving of the red, white, and blue, and the fireworks. There is freedom in all this 4<sup>th</sup> of July madness as Americans let go of all that may matter on this day. Freedom was granted by the British crown as America had developed

to the point of its own truth that it could no longer experience true growth and make its own political decisions attached to England, and it needed to be an independent nation.

My first career happens to be that of a high school English teacher by trade. I once read from a collection of poems with the theme of restlessness. One poem titled “Ride a Wild Horse” by Hannah Kahn struck my fancy and to this day has made an indelible impression on me. The poem read “Ride a wild horse/with purple wings/striped yellow and black/except his head/which must be red. Ride a wild horse/against the sky---/hold tight to his wings/before you die/whatever else you leave undone---/once ride a wild horse into the sun.” The rider’s restlessness allows for the creation of this imaginary striped yellow and black horse with purple wings and a red head, just as America’s restlessness led to its independence.

My first impression after reading this poem was that the description of the animal is irrelevant. What matters most is the theme of freedom, the ecstatic freedom of the spirit of the rider and this winged metaphorical horse as he and the rider ride against the sky in wild excitement before death, inferred by the phrase “into the sun.” This horse offers the rider freedom on an earthly level, but metaphorically, the freedom in the spirit is even more powerful as the rider and horse move toward the truth of the matter, eternity. This same fervor of Spirit can be seen in America’s quest for freedom. On a biblical level, it can also be seen in Zechariah 12:10 as God graciously promised to freely pour out his Spirit on the House of David.

Gerhard Kittel references the Old Testament and says that when we sin, the “spirit of truth...reacts to sin and gives birth to faith in Christ.” Romans 8:2 reads “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death” (NRSV). Harvey notes that in the New Testament, “Paul employs *pneuma* in reference to the peculiar redemptive power of God at work in Jesus Christ and in the lives of those who surrender their own claims of righteousness and accept God’s graciousness...a gift empowering the faithful to live free from the compulsion to sin.” Harvey further writes that the Holy Spirit is “a coequal and coeternal HYPOSTASIS or PERSON in the godhead” (Trinity) of Father (God), Son (Jesus Christ), and Holy Spirit (Spirit or Soul). The most frequently used word for Spirit in Greek is *pneuma* according to Harvey. The word *pneuma* is Greek for *breath*, but in a religious context, it could also mean *Spirit* and *soul*.

Freedom in the Spirit is offered to humanity by Christ if we choose to believe in Him and follow the laws of the Spirit and the Spirit realm. According to Van A. Harvey, *Spirit*, also called the

*Holy Spirit*, is “the Spirit of God” in the Old Testament. As such, it “is the power and presence of God in the world...that revitalizes man so that (he) ...may be said to have Spirit...*ruach* (in Hebrew) ...or distinctive powers (intelligence, will, and emotions) for the seat of human action and life (soul and heart).” Harvey notes that Spirit “motivates leaders, imparts wisdom, discernment, and holiness.” Gerhard Kittel writes “By his Spirit, God raises up charismatic leaders” in the Bible such as Gideon, Saul, and David (Judges 6:34; I Samuel 11:6; I Samuel 16:13).

An article from New Spring Church in South Carolina notes the Holy Spirit “is present in the world to make men aware of their need for Jesus.” The article says the Holy Spirit “lives in every believer from the moment of salvation” or when we accept Christ as our savior. The article also notes that the gifts of the Spirit (wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miracles or miraculous power, prophecy, and tongues or glossolalia) help humanity accept Jesus Christ as savior and helps to build the Church.

No one understands the Spirit. Kittel writes that “people are subject to” the Spirit and describes it as an “objective divine reality” possessing God’s power. He also says that God sustains his work with the Spirit” as seen in Job 34:14. Kittel writes the “Spirit is divine, holy, and immanent... (and) its logic defies analysis.” Therefore, there is not only freedom, but also inscrutable power in the Spirit.

Make a conscientious personal decision to seek salvation in Christ and remain spiritually free.

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## Resources

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