



REDWOOD

COVENANT CHURCH

July 1, 2010

Dear Friend,

I'm a patriot.

I'll admit it – I love the 4th of July. I like the whole schmaltzy, home town, red, white & blue colored gathering for a BBQ block party wearing goofy flag hats followed by oohs & ahhs of friends & neighbors when the fireworks red glare as bombs bursting in air. Having never served in the military, I run the risk of being labeled what our founding Father Thomas Paine called a "sunshine patriot" who might shrink from the service of my country during "the times that try men's souls".

I realize it is because of what others have done to establish and preserve freedom, including my Dad during World War II, that I have the privilege to be a "sunshine patriot".

But the trying of souls is something I know about during the stormy nights. I am reminded of the Apostle Paul who maneuvered his political status as a citizen of Rome to further the gospel. The halls of governmental power are common grounds for God's work throughout His salvation history. In Philippi, Paul chose to not let illegal abuse of him and Silas go unnoticed. (Acts 16:37) While innocent, Paul was facing wrongful accusations and a change of trial venue that would expose him to a fatal ambush. (Acts 25:3) He leveraged the law of the land by requesting a hearing in the highest court, "I appeal to Caesar" (Acts 25:11) He used his rights to position himself in the greatest places of influence while protecting himself against a kangaroo court or mob rule. His legal tactic was reinforced by the rebar of the Roman civil system. Paul employed political savvy as the means to fulfill the words of the Lord to him, "Take courage. You must also testify about me in Rome." (Acts 23:11)

One might conclude Paul used his law given freedom to imprison and burden his life. But he knew by the Sovereign Lord, "what has happened to me has served to advance the gospel. I am in chains for Christ." (Philippians 1:12-13) Not only did Paul's skillful use of his legal freedom advance his impact, we also read in scripture that "Most of the

brothers in the Lord have been encouraged to speak the Word of God more courageously and fearlessly." (ibid).

The question remains for us today, "How do we use our legally protected freedom as citizens of a blessed and rich country to advance the cause of our Lord and King?" The choice is ours. The choice is mine. The choice is yours.

"We recognize no Sovereign but God, and no King but Jesus"

John Hancock

I choose to practice my freedom of religion by worshipping with Redwood Covenant Church. My freedom of speech is laced with the grace of God found in the mercy of our crucified and resurrected Lord and Savior. My 4th of July is not just apple pie, baseball and hot dogs. It's red for the blood shed for me; white for the new life of forgiveness I now live; and blue for the peace promised when I trust in the Lord with all my heart and do not worry about relying on what little I understand. I'm not God. For that matter, I'm not even President. I'm just Doug. But I'm free to be the most purposeful, kingdom building, God fearing Doug I can be.

I invite you to live free. For the next six weeks starting Sunday, July 4th, we will gather to worship and serve our Lord in fellowship with each other at 9:30 or 11:11 AM. Journey with us through the book of Philippians to discover what it means to be "Free to Live": Free from fear, guilt, broken relationships, love of money and free to live & love.

Here are a few others things you can choose...

July 23-25 Redwood Family Camp

Andrew & Christy Mark – Support Raising for the gospel advance to Mexico City

Serve and support our Open Closet to neighbors struggling to make ends meet

See www.redwoodcovenant.org for all the details, pictures, contacts

Believe me, when you know the truth, it will set you free. If you don't know the truth, I'd love to introduce you to Him.

See you Sunday as we exercise our Freedom of Religion by God's grace shed on thee.

Pastor Doug Webster

P.S. As Uncle Noah was quoted to say,

"God's Word contained in the Bible has furnished all necessary rules to direct our conduct." Noah Webster