

One of the events held to help celebrate the founding of our still new nation is called the Freedom Run. It is, as the name suggests, an event in which people are invited to pay a small entry fee and then run one of several distances. It is a good, healthy way to start a great holiday celebration. But, I was thinking about this name in a broader context, and starting this week and continuing until I decide to write about something else, I want to explore the images that this name brings to my mind. I want to think about "freedom" and I want to think about "run" and how they do or do not go together as a concept, at least in my mind.

Let's start by thinking about "freedom." How would you define it? I invite you to think about freedom's definition this Sabbath day. I think about it as having at least two elements in the definition. First, privilege. Freedom gives us great privileges to engage in all sorts of activities which are denied people in oppressed countries. Second, duty. Freedom is not, as they say, "free." Those who desire to be free have a great duty, a responsibility to preserve it through protection against internal and external threats. And neither element of these two parts of freedom can exist for long apart from the other without destroying "freedom." Privilege exercised without restraint becomes anarchy, the loss of all order, leading to conflict and destruction. Duty enforced without limitation becomes totalitarian leading to violence against those who don't "stay in line" with the wishes of those in power. So, to maintain freedom, we need to protect and preserve both privilege and duty.

Are you free? If you live in the United States, well, then the answer is "yes", we are politically free because the "grand experiment" of democracy continues to find ways to create the necessary balance. I praise God for allowing us to enjoy this unalienable right.

Are you spiritually free? This is really the fundamental question which life requires us to answer. Do you know the power of Grace in your life, the grace which allows you to experience a freeing of your spirit? Do you know how to balance Grace with the duty of the Law? The Law is a way of helping us remain free! It is a way to live an ordered life, which we can explore through spiritual disciplines, so that we can fully enjoy the great measure of Grace offered to us. The spiritually free person is able to enjoy the knowledge of the privileges which Grace affords, while all the time being faithful to the duty to which the Law compels us. So, in this life, we seek freedom through balance. My eternal salvation is found in Grace alone; my ability to enjoy that salvation today is found in living life in the full knowledge of grace balanced by experiencing the discipline of the Law.

Enjoy your Freedom! And if you don't feel fully free just yet, well then maybe you will want to join me on the Freedom Run (?).

Shalom,
Bill TeWinkle
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