

## THE DOWNRIVER DISCIPLES PROJECT

explores



# THE RED, WHITE AND BLUE OF FREE WILL AND THE UNITED STATES CONSTITUTION

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On a quiet and serene 4th of July forenoon, the Holy Spirit led me to examine Scriptures related to Freedom In Christ. Five- no, seven hours later, I am finishing this unplanned document offering a thumbnail sketch of an infant country and what Jesus meant to them and a few tidbits in between. That's the Holy Spirit in motion, for sure, amen? A sure fire intention of watching 50s TV westerns on a lazy summer holiday morning suddenly turned into breaking out the Bible, a Concordance, a scratch pad, two pencils, one pen, a History book (okay, two) and OneNote. The one mainstay bridging the former hope and the latter reality was two cups of coffee. Here we go ...

The three colors of red, white and blue have similar significance in both American patriotism and Christianity. Let's take a look at how these three iconic colors came to hold such a prominent place in American culture as well as their relation to Christianity. We'll also examine free will, the U. S. Constitution and their respective roles in our lives. Oh, and who is Charles Thomson? Let's explore!

### COLORS OF THE GREAT SEAL OF THE UNITED STATES

On July 4, 1776, the same day America's thirteen separate states united to declare themselves an independent nation, the Continental Congress took the next step necessary to demonstrate this independence: they began to create their national emblem, the Great Seal of the United States. During the next six years of the American Revolution, three different committees submitted ideas for this graphic image of America, but none were acceptable (1).

On June 13, 1782, Congress turned the task over to their trusted Secretary, Charles Thomson (1729-1824). Serving as the only Secretary of the Continental Congress during its 15 year existence (1774-1789), he was one of America's most significant and influential Founding Fathers – a man very well qualified to translate the idea and ideals of America into symbolic imagery (6).

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Using symbolic elements from all three committees, plus imagery and mottoes of his own, Thomson created a bold and elegant design. One week later, on June 20, 1782, Thomson presented his design to Congress and stated, in part: "The colors of the pales (the vertical stripes) are those used in the flag of the United States of America; White signifies purity and innocence, Red, hardiness & valor, and Blue, the color of the Chief (the broad band above the stripes) signifies vigilance, perseverance & justice."

Congress adopted Thomson's recommendations that very same day and the Great Seal has since remained unchanged. (1)

### **COLORS OF THE STARS AND STRIPES**

This excerpt is from, "Our Flag," which was published by the U. S. House of Representatives (1989): "Even colors have specific meanings. The colors red, white, and blue did not have meanings for The Stars and Stripes when it was adopted in 1777. However, the colors in the Great Seal did have specific meanings." (3)

Background: On June 14, 1777, the Continental Congress met in Philadelphia and adopted the following resolution: "Resolved, that the flag of the United States be thirteen stripes, alternate red and white; that the union be thirteen stars, white in a blue field representing a new constellation." (2)

### **THE PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

The Pledge of Allegiance of the United States is an expression of allegiance to the Flag of the United States and to the Republic (not democracy) of the United States of America. Originally written in 1892, it has been modified to its current wording below:

"I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."

### **COLORS OF CHRISTIANITY**

First conceived in 1897, the Christian flag is an ecumenical banner adopted in 1942 by the Federal Council of Churches. A white flag with a blue square and red cross, it is designed to be universal and represent all of Christianity without regard to denomination (4).

The color red signifies the innocent blood of Jesus Christ shed for us at Calvary; the color white signifies purity and peace; the color blue signifies faithfulness, truth and sincerity (5).

There are multiple variations of pledges to and/or affirmations of loyalty to the Christian flag.

## STAYING THE COURSE WITH CHRIST

Charles Thomson was an expert in Latin and Greek. After retiring from public office in 1789, this exceptional public servant and ambassador for Christ spent the next two decades translating the Septuagint Bible from Greek into English. His works were later published and heralded for clarity and thoroughness (6).

## CODA

All Americans are not Christian.

In following the gift of Free Will bestowed upon us by [God Almighty](#) (7), the First Amendment to the United States Constitution permits expansive freedoms and privileges, to include that all Americans are not mandated to be Christians/[followers](#) (8) of [Jesus Christ](#) (9).

This was also the case before, during and after the American Revolution, when our Founding Fathers attested in an inexhaustible quantum of documents- both personal correspondence and governmental records- an unswerving [reliance upon God](#) (10).

The familiar history book names as well as the lesser known super patriots who risked their lives for our Nation's independence – the likes of Elbridge Gerry, John Adams, Gunning Bedford, Alexander Hamilton, Roger Sherman, John Hancock, Thomas Jefferson, and yes, George Washington, to name but a few- imagined that a Nation forged upon the [God-breathed](#) (11) [Good News](#) (12) could withstand any calamity whipped up by mortal man. Accordingly, it is indisputable that the core principles of Christianity were purposefully embedded into the foundation of our infant Nation, so as to protect it, sustain it and nurture it until the joyous return of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Now, it's up to us to put our gift of Free Will into action (or inaction). As we go, so does our Nation. Listed on the following pages is a sampling of [Old Testament](#) (13) and [New Testament](#) (14) Bible verses related to Freedom In Christ. Please share far and wide!

Modifications are welcome at [goodnews@downriverdisciples.com](mailto:goodnews@downriverdisciples.com). Remain blessed!

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## DOCUMENT FOOTNOTES/RESOURCES

- (1) <http://greatseal.com/overview.html>
- (2) <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/continental-congress-chooses-national-flag>
- (3) <http://www.usflag.org/colors.html>
- (4) <https://www.gotquestions.org/Christian-flag.html>
- (5) [A Theological Miscellany/Thomas Nelson \(pg 29\)](#)
- (6) <http://greatseal.com/committees/finaldesign/thomson.html>
- (7) <https://www.downriverdisciples.com/image-of-god>
- (8) <https://www.downriverdisciples.com/discipleship>
- (9) <https://www.downriverdisciples.com/jesus-christ>
- (10) <https://www.downriverdisciples.com/faith-in-god>
- (11) [https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2 Timothy 3:16-17](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2%20Timothy%203%3A16-17)
- (12) <https://www.downriverdisciples.com/the-good-news>
- (13) <https://www.downriverdisciples.com/old-testament>
- (14) <https://www.downriverdisciples.com/new-testament>

## OLD TESTAMENT BIBLE VERSES / FREEDOM IN CHRIST

**Psalm 119:45** I will walk about in freedom, for I have sought out Your precepts.

**Isaiah 61:1** "The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to proclaim Good News to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners . . ."

**Jeremiah 34:15** Recently you repented and did what is right in My sight: Each of you proclaimed freedom to your own people. You even made a covenant before Me in the house that bears my Name.

**Jeremiah 34:17** "Therefore, this is what the Lord says: You have not obeyed Me; you have not proclaimed freedom to your own people. So I now proclaim 'freedom' for you, declares the Lord – 'freedom' to fall by the sword, plague and famine. I will make you abhorrent to all the kingdoms of the earth.

## NEW TESTAMENT BIBLE VERSES / FREEDOM IN CHRIST

**Luke 4:18** "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because He has anointed me to proclaim Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free . . ."

**Romans 8:21** that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.

**1 Corinthians 7:21** Were you a slave when you were called? Don't let it trouble you – although if you can gain your freedom, do so.

**1 Corinthians 9:19** [*Paul's Use of His Freedom*] Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible.

**1 Corinthians 10:23** [*The Believer's Freedom*] "I have the right to do anything," you say – but not everything is beneficial. "I have the right to do anything" – but not everything is constructive.

**1 Corinthians 10:29** I am referring to the other person's conscience, not yours. For why is my freedom being judged by another's conscience?

**2 Corinthians 3:17** Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.

**Galatians 2:4** This matter arose because some false believers had infiltrated our ranks to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus and to make us slaves.

**Galatians 5:1** [*Freedom in Christ*] It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.

**NEW TESTAMENT BIBLE VERSES / FREEDOM IN CHRIST**  
**(continued)**

**Galatians 5:13** [*Life by the Spirit*] You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love.

**Ephesians 3:12** In Him and through faith in Him we may approach God with freedom and confidence.

**Colossians 2:16** [*Freedom From Human Rules*] Therefore, do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day.

**James 1:25** But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it – not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it – they will be blessed in what they do.

**James 2:12-13** Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

**1 Peter 2:16** Live as free people, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as God's slaves.

**2 Peter 2:19** They promise them freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity – for “people are slaves to whatever has mastered them.”