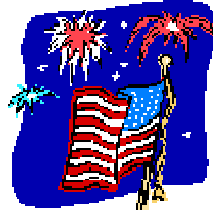


## 4<sup>TH</sup> OF JULY



"Then He said to them, 'Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's.'"

(Matt.22:21)

The 4<sup>th</sup> of July is a day when we think about our freedom and, hopefully, the men and women who have lost their lives over the decades to allow us to have it. Our country was founded on Biblical principles and our success has been phenomenal. We have been the greatest country in the world but we find ourselves in a position where the loss of our freedoms appears to be moving our way; a little like a snowball rolling down a hill, gathering more snow and speed as it rolls. It seems like almost daily we hear or read of another "small" thing the government is legislating that directly involves who we have been as a country and a people. Anxiety and a feeling of powerlessness lurks around every corner and we wonder, "What's going to become of us?"

I confess I am prone to anxiety and I have to really pay attention to it or it tries to overwhelm me. I hear the news and what people are saying, people in positions of power, and I get nervous. "What in the world is happening?" As I was thinking about these things this morning, the story of an encounter Jesus had with the Pharisees came to mind. They were trying (once again) to trick Him into being a subversive and came to Him asking about paying taxes. Jesus, "knowing their evil intent", called them on their plan and told them to show Him a coin. On the coin was imprinted the image and words of Caesar. His answer to them caused them to turn away in amazement because He said, "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's." The coin had Caesar's imprint on it and clearly belonged to him. The thing Jesus didn't say, however, was that men are made in the image of God and therefore, belong to God. He turned their trick around and trapped them instead; how could they argue with that?

It was the material world against the spiritual world and they had no argument against it. It was about their focus. It's about my focus. When I worry about the state of our country (or the world), the freedom I can see slowly but surely going down the drain or the obvious power plays of government officials, I lose my focus. I become focused on situations and circumstances that will not matter one iota in heaven. Worrying about things I can do nothing about keeps me chained in one place and I am consumed with the physical things of this world. I am anxious and helpless. When my focus is on Jesus, I have peace and can

put those negative things in perspective; I can have true freedom. Then I can pray about them rather than wringing my hands over them. "No Jesus, no peace. Know Jesus, know peace."

"But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own." (Matt. 6:33-34)

So, where does our freedom really come from? Is from our government doing all the things we think should be done? Is from laws that will protect us and our "rights"? Is it from money that is imprinted with a ruler's image on it? Or....does real freedom come from the One whose image we are imprinted with?

"Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, in Our likeness...' So, God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them." (Gen.1:26-27)

*Walk in freedom this week!*  
*Georgia*