

UNDER LAW, NOT UNDER MEN

A Devotional by Pastor Carl Toti

The Lord's Day | August 2, 2026

BIG IDEA: Freedom is a three-act story — it must be won, ordered, and sustained. The ordering of freedom for America was the creation of our Constitution, and the sustaining of it is still being written, one generation at a time.

Key Scripture: Deuteronomy 17:18-20

Also referenced: Exodus 8:1

"And when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself in a book a copy of this law... And it shall be with him, and he shall read in it all the days of his life... that his heart may not be lifted up above his brothers, and that he may not turn aside from the commandment, either to the right hand or to the left." — Deuteronomy 17:18-20 (NKJV)

In 2012, Os Guinness made a profound observation in his book *A Free People's Suicide: Sustainable Freedom and the American Future*. He wrote, "Freedom must be won, then ordered, then sustained." That single sentence maps almost perfectly onto the story of Scripture — and it maps just as precisely onto your life this week.

Movement One — Freedom Won

"Then the LORD said to Moses, 'Go in to Pharaoh and tell him, "Thus says the LORD: Let My people go, that they may serve Me."'" — Exodus 8:1 (NKJV)

Notice what God did not say. He did not say, "Let My people go, that they may do whatever they want." Freedom, in Scripture, was never an empty space. The moment Pharaoh's grip loosened, the vacancy became an invitation — an invitation for Israel to belong to someone new. That is the pattern every time God liberates: He does not just remove a master. He offers Himself as a better one.

This is why freedom that is only won and never filled always collapses back into something else. It's not enough to get alcohol out of the house if Christ never moves into the house. It's not enough to stop looking at pornography if your mind is never renewed by the Word of God. It's not enough to leave an abusive relationship if your identity is never rebuilt in Christ. And it's not enough for a nation to throw off a tyrant if it never orders its liberty under righteousness.

Big Takeaway: Winning freedom only creates a vacancy. What fills that vacancy determines whether you are actually free, or just newly unsupervised.

Movement Two — Freedom Ordered

Before Israel's king ever wore a crown, he had to pick up a pen. He copied the law in his own hand so there would be no daylight between the man and the standard he was bound to keep. Fifty-five men in Philadelphia understood the same instinct three

thousand years later when they wrote a Constitution — power that answers to nothing but itself always goes bad eventually.

The same is true in you. The freedom Christ won for you was never meant to leave you ungoverned. It was meant to place you under a better Master, whose commands are not a cage but a fence around a cliff. Real freedom orders itself under truth; anything else is just a longer road back to bondage.

Big Takeaway: Freedom that refuses order is not freedom at all — it is a slower, more comfortable slavery.

Movement Three — Freedom Sustained

Winning freedom is a moment. Ordering freedom is a document. But sustaining freedom is a generation-after-generation fight, and it is the one most free peoples — and most free hearts — quietly lose. Not to invasion. Not to conquest. To forgetting.

This is why one good decision is never the whole story. The addict who gets free needs a plan for next Tuesday, not just today. The nation that wins independence needs citizens who keep teaching their children why it mattered. The believer who repents needs daily bread from the Word, not a one-time meal. Freedom is not a trophy you win once and set on a shelf. It is a fire you have to keep feeding, or it will go out quietly while you assume it is still burning.

Big Takeaway: Freedom is not maintained by memory. It is maintained by daily obedience, taught on purpose, to the next generation and to your own heart.

Closing Prayer

Father, thank You for freedom won at the cross, ordered by Your Word, and sustained by Your Spirit. Where I have mistaken a vacancy for victory, fill me with Christ. Where I have resisted Your ordering, break my stubbornness and give me a heart that copies Your law without resentment. And where I have grown careless, remind me daily what this freedom cost, and give me the discipline to hand it down to those who watch my life. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Action Step / Reflection Questions

1. Where in your life have you experienced a "vacancy" freedom — free from something, but not yet filled with Christ?
2. What is one area where you have freedom but have refused to order it under God's Word?
3. Who is one person you are responsible to teach or model sustained freedom for this week — a child, a friend, a neighbor?
4. What is one daily practice you will commit to this week so your freedom is sustained rather than assumed?

Notes & Journaling
