

## Freedom Is ...

Freedom. It's such a small word, and yet the dreams of a lifetime, the yearnings of the heart, are wrapped up in it. Monday and Tuesday of this week, most of us will scarcely think about it. We'll be too busy with boating and picnics and backyard barbecues to reflect on it.

Freedom. It's a state that can never be obtained by most of the world's peoples, for those in authority over them will make decisions for them, order their lives for them, and destroy their personal initiatives.

Freedom. Those who are denied it are willing to take desperate gambles to achieve it. East Germans who challenged the Berlin Wall – some successfully and some losing their lives in the act – and citizens of Afghanistan and Iraq who joined with U.S. forces to overthrow dictatorial regimes offer testimony to the priceless nature of it.

Freedom. Citizens of no other land have savored the full flavor of it as have Americans. And no one else takes it for granted as do we. Our apathy threatens to rob us of it.

Freedom. It means the right to work at an occupation of one's choosing, to speak freely, to worship as one believes. Or do none of these things.

Freedom. It is recognition that other people have different tastes, different philosophies, different lifestyles than our own, and it is an acceptance of their right to be different.

Freedom. It draws its great strength from our diversity – of skills, of ideas, of ambitions.

Freedom. It rests on our determination to preserve it. And that is what troubles me most. Many Americans do not give evidence of having strong concern for it. We are not an Iraq or Iran, a Cuba, a Bangladesh, an India or South Africa. We live in the finest nation this world has produced – a country with the greatest personal opportunities. We have achieved this status because of our emphasis on human dignity and individual liberty.

Freedom. We pray that we shall always treasure this precious gift and preserve it at all cost. This Fourth of July 2006 is a good time to make that commitment.

--Beecher Hunter