

The Chakra Test: Are We Still Turning?

A Sermon for the Eightieth Independence Day of India

Sermon Family, Discipleship and the Christian Life 15 August 2026

Exodus 20:2 (quoted)

Numbers 14:2-4 (quoted)

Deuteronomy 2:3 (quoted)

John 8:36 (quoted)

Galatians 5:1 (quoted)

2 Peter 2:22 (quoted)

Opening — The Wheel on the Flag

Before I say one word about 1947, please look at our flag. Not at the saffron, not at the white, not at the green — look at the small blue wheel resting in the centre. Twenty-four spokes, turning forever, carved from a pillar that has stood at Sarnath for more than two thousand years.

Somebody, in the room where our constitution was being written, could have chosen a plain circle. A circle would have looked just as dignified sitting in the centre of white. But a circle only closes in on itself. A wheel is a circle that has been given a reason to move. The people who designed our flag did not want a nation that merely admired itself. **They wanted a nation that kept turning, kept advancing, kept becoming.**

That is the question I want to put to us this morning, on Independence Day, and it is not the question we usually ask. We usually ask, "What did we gain in 1947?" I want to ask something harder: **"Are we still turning, turning slower, or have we quietly stopped, or worse still, are we turning backwards?"** A frightening question.

To answer that, I am not going to take you to 15 August. I am going to take you to a much older Independence Day, and to a night when a whole nation of freed people, only months after their liberation, sat down in the desert and voted to go back into slavery. What a dichotomy.

Two Kinds of Freedom

Let us first be honest about what freedom actually means, because Scripture will not let us define it the easy way.

Secular independence, the kind we remember today, is essentially a negative freedom — freedom from foreign rule, from a flag that was not ours, from laws we had no voice in making. It is precious, paid for at an enormous cost, and we are right to be grateful for it. But by itself, freedom from all those is unfinished business. It tells you what has been removed. It does not yet tell you what you should stand for.

The Bible begins its account of freedom in the same place — freedom from slavery. When God introduces Himself to the newly rescued Israelites, He does not begin with a rule. He begins with a rescue:

I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. — Exodus 20:2

Grace comes before command. Deliverance comes before duty.

But the Bible never leaves freedom there. Theological independence, biblical independence, is not only freedom from sin, from guilt, from the accusing power of the law. It is freedom for something. Freedom for righteousness. Freedom for love. Freedom for a purpose large enough to be worth the chains that were broken to give it to us.

The Night They Chose to Go Back — Numbers 14

Here is the part of the story we rarely tell on Independence Day, because it is not flattering.

The generation that walked out of Egypt had seen everything. They had watched ten plagues fall on their oppressor. They had walked through a sea on dry ground while that same oppressor's army drowned behind them. They had heard the very voice of God at Sinai. Within roughly two years, this generation stood at the border of the land they had been promised, close enough to send in scouts, close enough to touch it.

And all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron: and the whole congregation said unto them, Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt! or would God we had died in this wilderness! And wherefore hath the LORD brought us unto this land, to fall by the sword, that our wives and our children should be a prey? were it not better for us to return into Egypt? And they said one to another, Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt. — Numbers 14:2-4

Sit with that. Free people, eyewitnesses of their own liberation, seriously discussing a return to the very slavery they had been rescued from — not because Egypt had been good to them, but because Egypt had been familiar, and the future in front of them required a faith they were not willing to accept. I wonder how many of us gathered here have witnessed our transition to independence? I did, as I was born four years ahead, but I have just vague recollections of jubilation all around.

Going back to the discussion, because of that unbelief, that generation did not enter the land. They did not go back to literal slavery either. They did something arguably sadder: they went in circles. For thirty-eight years they wandered the same hill country, until God finally said

to them:

Ye have compassed this mountain long enough: turn you northward. — Deuteronomy 2:3

A whole generation, spinning in place. A wheel that had stopped carrying anyone forward. That was where they were. **Which God is asking us to look to today?**

Are We Still Turning? — The National Mirror

I ask this question of us as a nation first, and I ask it gently, because I do not stand here as a political commentator but as a lay preacher. In eighty years, has India been walking toward the land it was promised in 1947 — a land of dignity for the poor, of justice across every caste and community, of unity that does not depend on sameness? Or have we, in certain quiet ways, learned to prefer the Egypt we know — the corruption we no longer notice because we have stopped expecting better, the division we nurse because it is easier than the harder work of belonging to one another? A nation can remain independent on paper while its people vote, in a thousand small daily choices, to keep circling the same hill.

Are We Still Turning? — The Personal Mirror

But I ask the question far more searchingly of us as Christians, because this is where it actually bites. Many of us were once slaves to something with a much smaller name than an empire — a temper, a bitterness you have nursed for years, an appetite, a relationship you already know is not right, a despair in which you have resigned simply to be who you are. And then Christ met you, and broke it, and Jesus Himself said the words that ought to be remembered by every believer:

If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed. — John 8:36

That freedom was real. But freedom, once granted, still has to be inhabited every single day, or it quietly becomes a memory instead of a possession. Peter, writing to believers who had genuinely tasted grace and were drifting back to their old life, used an image deliberately chosen to be uncomfortable:

But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire. — 2 Peter 2:22

It is not a pleasant verse. It was not meant to be. It was meant to stop

us, the way I hope it is stopping some of us now, and make us ask: is there an Egypt I have been quietly negotiating my way back toward?

What to Look Forward To

Here is the mercy in this story, and it is where I want to leave you, because the Bible never tells this story to bury us in guilt and make us walk away.

That wilderness generation's unbelief did not cancel the promise.

It only meant that a new generation, thirty-eight years later, would have to walk into the land their parents refused. God's freedom always has a future tense. **What one generation forfeits by fear, another may still claim by faith.** That is true of nations, and it is true of every family and every believer here today.

And this is exactly where Paul, writing to a young church tempted to trade the freedom of the gospel for the safety of old religious chains, gives us the sentence that ought to be the true theme of every Independence Day sermon:

Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. — Galatians 5:1

Notice the verb. Not enjoy the freedom, not merely remember the freedom — stand firm. Freedom is not a monument you visit once a year and admire. It is a daily stance, a daily choosing, a wheel that must be turned again this morning and again tomorrow morning, because a wheel that is merely admired stops being a wheel and becomes a carving.

That is why our flag did not settle for a circle. A circle can be perfectly beautiful but go absolutely nowhere. Our nation's own symbol quietly preaches this sermon better than I can: real independence, the kind that lasts, is never a shape you achieved once. It is a motion you must keep choosing.

Closing — A Call to Response

So here is what I am asking of you today, before this event ends. Do not leave these premises only having remembered 1947. Name, honestly, in the quiet of your own heart, the one place where you have been walking in circles, or where you have been quietly eyeing a road back to an old Egypt — an old temper, an old grudge, an old sin, an old despair. And then choose, as an act of your will, right now, to turn north.

Stand firm in the freedom Christ has already purchased for you at a far greater cost than any earthly independence ever cost anyone. And as a

citizen of this country, keep walking, keep insisting, keep hoping toward the India that is still becoming, still unfinished, still worth the turning.

The wheel on our flag never stops turning. Let us not be the generation that does.

Benediction

May the God who brought us out of every Egypt we have ever known also carry us, day by day, into everything He has promised — and may we have the courage, this year and every year, to keep the wheel turning. Amen.