

A sunset beach scene with a woman on the shore and a couple in the water. The sky is filled with golden light and clouds, with two birds flying in the upper right. The foreground shows footprints on the sand leading towards the water.

*Baptism:*  
**FREEDOM  
FOR LIFE**

IT IS WRITTEN<sup>®</sup>

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Ratified in 1776, the United States' Declaration of Independence states that every human being was created with "certain unalienable Rights,"<sup>1</sup> rights which can be neither given nor taken away. Among these, America's founding document states, are "Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."<sup>2</sup>

However, the document declaring freedom an unalienable right was written when 20% of the entire population in the 13 mainland colonies were enslaved.<sup>3</sup> The tide would eventually turn against slavery in the United States, but long before it did, there burned a desire in the hearts of the enslaved to be free. Just as ancient Israel yearned to throw off the shackles of slavery, and just as God's people wished to throw off the yoke of Roman tyranny approximately 1,500 years later, slaves in the United

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1 "Declaration of Independence: A Transcription," The U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, accessed January 20, 2023, <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript>.

2 Ibid.

3 "Unit 3 African American Slavery in the Colonial Era, 1619-1775," New Jersey State Library, accessed January 20, 2023, [https://www.njstatelib.org/research\\_library/new\\_jersey\\_resources/highlights/african\\_american\\_history\\_curriculum/unit\\_3\\_colonial\\_era\\_slavery/](https://www.njstatelib.org/research_library/new_jersey_resources/highlights/african_american_history_curriculum/unit_3_colonial_era_slavery/).

States and in other places around the world yearned to be free.

Many were willing to jeopardize their lives in an attempt to gain freedom. In the United States, a network of routes and safe houses was established by which enslaved African Americans might escape slavery in the American South and flee to free states or Canada. It has been said that as many as 100,000 slaves were guided to freedom via the Underground Railroad.<sup>4</sup>

After purchasing his freedom from slavery, John Parker joined many others in dedicating his life to freeing those bound by slavery. On one occasion, learning a slave master had placed the infant child of two slaves in his own bedroom in an attempt to keep the infant's parents from escaping, Parker swung into action.

Parker, a talented and industrious man, who operated a successful iron foundry in Ripley, Ohio, was one of the few African Americans to patent an invention before the year 1900. When the sun

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<sup>4</sup> Jesse Greenspan, "6 Strategies Harriet Tubman and Others Used to Escape Along the Underground Railroad," History, accessed January 20, 2023, <https://www.history.com/news/underground-railroad-harriet-tubman-strategies>.

went down at the end of a workday, Parker helped runaways across the Ohio River to safe houses in free territory.

Learning of the plight of the couple and their baby, Parker crossed the Ohio River in the dead of night. After traveling to the home of the family, Parker crept quietly into the owner's bedroom, took the baby, and fled! He narrowly avoided being shot when the slave owner awakened. Mother, father, baby, and John Parker all made it safely across the river to Ripley. For the couple and their baby, it was the beginning of a brand-new life, the dawn of a new hope.<sup>5</sup>

The desire to be free has been imprinted in the DNA of human beings since Creation itself. Though created as free moral agents, Adam and Eve forfeited their freedom when they yielded to temptation in the Garden of Eden. The human family became the subjects of “the prince of this world” (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11, KJV). Now sinners, they had forfeited the blessing of God and had chosen instead servitude and bondage. They were lost. There would now be

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5 Monica Drake, “In Ohio, a Warrior Against Slavery,” *New York Times*, February 24, 2017, accessed January 20, 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/24/travel/ripley-ohio-underground-railroad-john-parker-slavery.html>.

enmity between the world's first inhabitants and Satan, who had lied in telling Eve that she would "not surely die" (Genesis 3:4, KJV). "In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground," God said, "for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return" (Genesis 3:19). Sin had brought death. Sin had robbed earth's first inhabitants of their freedom.

Leaves now fell and decayed. Cursed, the ground would bring forth thorns and thistles. Animals began to die (Genesis 3:21). Adam and Eve's own son murdered his brother (Genesis 4:8).

The earth itself was fundamentally altered. Yet the first promise ever made—made to a broken world—was a promise that spoke of hope for people trapped in sin. God said to Satan, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel" (Genesis 3:15). Inherent in the promise of a Messiah was the promise that humanity could again experience freedom.

Life on earth today is the quest to be free from sin and free to live eternally. Even though the Emancipation Proclamation was signed in 1863, an unfathomable amount of people are still trapped