

Preface

1. The leaders of our country in their struggle for independence often spoke of the Lord and relied upon His leadership in what we call the war for independence. These leaders clearly recognized the danger in declaring independence from a foreign power: A quote or two will perhaps help us to understand better what they believed concerning their future and Who controlled that future. For example:

1.1 Henry Muhlenberg, one of the founders of the Lutheran Church in America, and the pastor of a local church near Valley Forge while preaching to his congregation spoke of General George Washington as follows:

“I heard a fine example today, namely, that His Excellency General George Washington rode around among his army yesterday and admonished each and every one to fear God, to put away the wickedness ... and to practice the Christian virtues. From all appearances, this gentleman does not belong to the so-called world of society, for he respects God’s Word, believes in the atonement through Christ, and bears himself in humility and gentleness. Therefore, the Lord God has also singularly, yes marvelously, preserved him from harm in the midst of many perils, and has hitherto graciously held him in His hand as a chosen vessel.” He closed his message by saying: ‘In the language of the Holy Writ, there is a time for all things. There is a time to preach and a time to fight.’”

1.2 After his stirring message in which he spoke of his opinion of General Washington, the Reverend threw off his robes to reveal the uniform of an officer in the Revolutionary Army. That afternoon, at the head of 300 men, he marched off to join General Washington’s troops ... He served until the end of the war; during this time, he was promoted to Major General.

1.3 Abigail Adams, wife of John Adams the second president of the United States spoke of the source of future events:

“The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, but the God of Israel is He that giveth strength and power unto His people.”

1.4 George Washington, Commander of the Revolutionary Army encouraged his men:

“The fate of unborn millions will now depend, under God, on the fate on the courage of this army ... We have, therefore, to resolve to conquer or die.”

1.5 Samuel Adams spoke of the source of our rights as “endowed by the laws of the Creator.”

1.6. Many years later John F. Kennedy, our 35th President reminded us of the source of our inalienable rights: “The rights of man come not from the generosity of the state, but from the hand of God.”

1.7 May the Lord bless the teaching of the Word this day. Let us pray:

Father, this morning we acknowledge that You reign in majesty and strength. The world You established cannot be moved. Your throne is forever. The seas lift up their voices in praise of Your name; the pounding of the waves give evidence of Your greatness. The distant thunder gives indication of Your power. Your statutes stand forever. Holiness adorns Your presence and though the wicked spring up like grass and evildoers seem to flourish, they will soon be destroyed because You and You only are worthy.

The evildoers pour out arrogant words. They boast of their deeds. They hunt down Your people, they ridicule Your Words, they speak of the Christian faith as but an opiate of a deplorable people out of step with political correctness and diversity. But we know You have not rejected Your people. Many in this world band together against us. Their leaders have risen to positions of power, just as they did in 1776. We are no longer, however, under bondage from those across the Atlantic but we are in bondage by those who sit in judgment of us.

Help us this morning to learn from the examples of our national forefathers who decided freedom was worth any sacrifice.

Introduction

1. To honor America on this 1st day of July in anticipation of Wednesday, the 4th of July, I thought it might be of value to think about liberty and its price. Some of us take the liberties that we enjoy today for granted. We shouldn't because the Revolutionary War was just the first of many battles and wars fought by brave men on battlefields all over the world.

2. So what happened to those 56 men who signed the Declaration of Independence?

2.1 Four signers were captured by the British, tortured and executed. Twelve had their homes ransacked and burned. Two lost their sons while serving in the Revolutionary Army and one had two sons captured.

2.2 Nine of the 56 fought and died from wounds and hardships of the war. Captain Braxton of Virginia, a wealthy planter and trader saw his ships swept from the sea by the British Navy and his home confiscated to pay his debts. He died in rags, a poor and disconsolate patriot.

2.3 Thomas McKean served in the Congress without pay, his possessions were taken and poverty was his reward. The history of the signers is replete with stories of similar horrific sacrifices.

2.4 Freedom indeed has its price, it is not free, it has never been free nor will it ever be free. Liberty has always had need for soldiers with the courage to fight and die for their country. June the 6th, 1944 was aptly called by Cornelius Ryan in his book *The Longest Day*. That day found the price of freedom being paid all across France. I will quote a small but never to be forgotten adventure chronicled in that book.

"The Longest Day was soon to come, the invasion of Normandy was about to begin but first numerous towns and villages located on strategic roads behind enemy lines had to be secured. And only the airborne could do that job. The Hun had to be blocked, replacements must not be permitted access to Omaha or Utah Beach; such was the assignment for the 82nd and 101st Airborne.

"In wave after wave, 882 aircraft carrying 13,000 men were heading for six drop zones - all within a few miles of St. Mere-Eglise. In the square of the city everyone looked up. The burning house forgotten, no one had time to put out the fire. Warriors were tumbling out of the sky; the guns of the city began to belch a reign of terror for men whose average age was only 20; the church bell clanged to sound the alarm. This would be the last sound many of the warriors of the 82nd and the 101st would ever hear."

"The sound of freedom is often preceded by the sound of battle followed by terrible memories of brave men like Private Ernest Blanchard. He heard the church bell, he heard the gunfire but years later he could only remember seeing a fellow paratrooper disintegrate before his very eyes. He and his friend had jumped into the darkness just a moment before.

"Gunfire from the ground had detonated his friend's pack of ordinance which had been wrapped snugly around his body. Private Blanchard's fellow pathfinder was now plasma, a vapor disappearing into the night; he was on his way to serve elsewhere. He wouldn't need the ordinance anymore."

2.5 But wait, the price of your freedom and mine was paid long before 1944. It began with the Seven Years War; a war known in North America as the French and Indian War. This war settled forever a century-long struggle between England and France for colonial supremacy.

2.6 Although the 13 English colonies had provided most of the manpower for that part of the conflict fought in America, numerous units of the British Regular Army had been sent from England, there had been a major commitment of forces by the Royal Navy and the Royal Exchequer had footed all of the bills.

2.7 It seemed only right to King George that the colonists should pay for their own security; their defense should no longer be a burden for the British taxpayer. The colonists were determined that they would not pay for, or accept, any obligations imposed on them by a legislature in which they had no vote. "Taxation without representation is tyranny," they said.

2.8 Local colonial governments met to assert their rights as British subjects. The British however were equally determined that the laws should be enforced. Parliament was convinced that the colonists were trying to avoid financial responsibility by placing the burdens of colonial administration and security upon England.

2.9 The people of Massachusetts took the lead in opposition to the increasingly harsh enforcement measures. In 1772, under the leadership of Samuel Adams, a Committee of Correspondence was secretly formed to begin planning for the use of force, if necessary. In the spring of 1775, a delegation signed and sent to King George, what came to be known as the Olive Branch Resolution. The headstrong King refused to even receive the courier.

2.10 Plans were immediately made in the colonies to declare their independence. A Declaration of Independence was voted in convention by the colonies on July 2, 1776, and proclaimed two days later on July the 4th. The first of many wars for freedom would soon begin. Men would soon die because freedom has a price. Freedom is never free.

2.11 We should celebrate with special appreciation the 4th of July; special appreciation for the men in wars both here and abroad who elected to die while marching forward to assail a waiting enemy; all amidst terrible odds and all because they thought freedom was worth the ultimate price. The Bible is full of similar tales of sacrifice for freedom.

History of Biblical Sacrifice

1. Cyrus, King of Persia, in 540 B.C. spoke of freedom to a small band of liberty-loving Jews, Jews who had been forcefully detained for more than three generations. They were detained first along the banks of the Tigris River in 606 B.C. and then later in a place known today as the land of the Ayatollah. Cyrus would respond to a request made by Daniel, "Zerubbabel you may return to your homeland."

2. The story of the return from Persia, like every story of freedom, is never an isolated event; it is a plan involving many. The scenario was a complicated divine plan, because freedom is God's first divine institution. It is God who sponsors liberty with a special verve, and an historical animated enthusiasm. Every client nation to God must provide freedom and freedom is protected best in nations. This is God's plan.

Gen 10:5 By these were the isles of the Gentiles divided in their lands; every one after his tongue, after their families, in their nations.

3. It was God who destroyed the first United Nations.

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Gen 11:9 Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the LORD scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.

4. Satan's plan is to weaken the nations and sponsor internationalism.

Isa 14:12 How are you fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how are you cut down to the ground, you who did weaken the nations!

5. Much of the Bible tells of man and his quest for freedom. A client nation must provide privacy, freedom and the right of the individual to pursue a course based upon his own volition and ability within the framework of the rules of law duly established by a sovereign state. In a Christian nation freedom must provide for the right to accept or reject Christ, to believe or disbelieve the Bible and even to distort His precious Word.

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Acts 17:27 God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us.

6. The saga of freedom for the Jews of three major dispersions, began in c. 536 B.C. when some 50,000 intrepid but determined Jews who trusted in the promises of God made their way to Jerusalem to rebuild the Temple.

7. A remnant would carry the seeds of freedom to plant them in the land; there they would wait with great anticipation their promised Messiah. Zerubbabel and Joshua led that first cadre of intrepid Jews back to their land of promise to plant their royal escutcheon.

8. There would be Arabs and Samaritans in the land who would resist their efforts to rebuild the Temple but Zerubbabel and his men would stand in the gap, militarily prepared for combat, should their adversaries demand war.

9. Later the torch of freedom would be handed to Nehemiah and his generation. It would be their turn to stand in the gap, to follow the colors to the high ground, to work within the bounds of establishment and to influence yet another king. This King's name would be Artaxerxes and the year would be c. 445 B.C.

10. Men like Daniel, who served and influenced Nebuchadnezzar; men like Zerubbabel, who ministered to and influenced Cyrus, and now a man like Nehemiah would influence Artaxerxes. These men had worked their way up to positions of influence. Freedom would forever be grateful.

11. Freedom of choice, volition, had been used of the Lord to set the stage for a fight to determine who would control the land earlier given to His chosen people.

Gen 12:7 And the LORD appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto the LORD, who appeared unto him.

Gen 15:18 In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates.

12. The time had come for God to sound the toll of freedom, liberty for these lovers of choice, and the restrained exercise of violence. It would not come easy. Nehemiah not only had to summon the courage to ask for permission and assistance for the long, dangerous and arduous journey home, but he also had to generate both courage and leadership to resist those in the land who wanted to foil the will of God.

12.1 Nehemiah prayed and God answered and the King authorized a return to the land to rebuild the city of Jerusalem.

12.2 Nehemiah set off on a journey west across deserts and mountains in search of liberty. Upon arriving in the land, he found there was little to please the eye, no manifestation of freedom, no parades and flags and yet freedom very often begins with a step of faith and the use of personal choice.

13. Later during the age of the Judges freedom required many sacrifices; sometimes by unlikely players.

13.1 For example, God called Gideon, a farmer found hiding from the Midianites in an underground barn used to hide his product from marauding Arabs. God promptly gave his marching orders. "Get up hero I have work for you to do." Gideon with 300 men routed the Midianites and freedom became a reality.

13.2 And later David, a young man who had just completed his compulsory military training, was selected to slay a nine-foot giant.

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1Sa 17:51 Therefore David ran, and stood upon the Philistine, and took Goliath's sword, ... and cut off his head ... the Philistines hastily fled the battlefield ...”

The Chief Threat to Freedom

1. Belligerent nations wield military force not to defend their sovereignty but to vanquish and enslave other nations. They are deterred only when confronted by a superior force.

2. General George S. Patton has written of war, "Yes, no doubt war is unreasonable and makes little sense to a reasonable man but 2000 years of history has shown us that only mad men make wars and the world has no shortage of *mad men*." No doubt today, with revolutions, wars, genocides, and suicide bombings going on all over the world, one could conclude there are still enough mad men to go around.

3. Our Lord said to His disciples, "Until I return there will always be wars and rumors of war."

4. Man with his efforts at peace pipes, peace councils, treaties, leagues of nations, united nations, alliances and promises of one "worldism" have perpetually whirled peace semantics about with great marbled nuances. Useless promises written on parchments elegantly inscribed by politicians interested in elevating themselves above the protocol of God's laws and basic principles of national sovereignty abound. The prophet Jeremiah said it best, "They dress the wound of my people as though it were not serious. 'Peace, peace,' they say, when there is no peace."

5. Men worth their salt must be ready to fight and to die for their homes and their families. The nobility of this concept was captured by General Douglas MacArthur.

"The soldier, above all other men, is required to practice the greatest act of religious training--sacrifice. In battle and in the face of danger and death, he discloses those divine attributes which his Maker gave when He created man in His own image. No physical courage and no brute instinct can take the place of the divine help which alone can sustain. However horrible the incidents of war may be, the soldier who is called upon to offer and to give his life for his country is the noblest development of mankind ... the soldier above all other people, prays for peace, for he must suffer and bear the deepest wounds and scars of war. But always in our ears rings the ominous words of Plato "only the dead have seen the end of war."

6. Our freedom which we celebrate each year on the 4th of July came at a price in money, life and limb but liberty is so precious it must be guarded constantly, and so, for America, national freedom began in 1776. As we ponder our freedom we must keep in mind that Americans through the ages have chosen to make a statement about freedom.

7. One such statement was made on February 23, 1969, in the Republic of Vietnam. PFC Oscar P. Austin went to the aid of a fellow Marine. As he neared the wounded man, a grenade hit the ground nearby. Austin threw himself between the injured Marine and the grenade. He caught the full effect and was killed instantly. For this heroism he was awarded the Medal of Honor.

8. Is resistance to an aggressor nation worth that price? Ask those survivors of the communist killing fields of Cambodia who witnessed 1,700,000 of their families and friends murdered. Ask the Rwandans who in less than three months saw 800,000 of their wives, sisters, brothers, and fellow tribesmen butchered. Ask the Algerians who lost 100,000 citizens to Muslim extremists and ask the families and friends of the almost 3,000 Americans killed or horribly burned by Muslim terrorists on September 11th 2001.

9. We in the United States have been fortunate to have fought our last several wars and police actions on the soil of other lands and thus avoided the first-hand ravages of war. The reason for our blessing comes from our client-nation status which spawned a brave cadre of fighting men who time and again have risen to the occasion and risked everything when duty called.

10. George Patton in August 1945 spoke to key members of his Third Army:

"You men have just won a great war. The record of your accomplishment speaks for itself. As a moderate estimate we killed, wounded or captured ten Germans for every American lost, killed or wounded. Now that all or nearly all of you are returning to civilian life, I believe I should continue to do my best to instruct how to save your lives and the lives of your children.

"I realize that in doing this I shall be criticized, but my conscience will be much clearer in the knowledge that I have done my duty as I see it. It is certain that the two world wars in which I have participated would not have occurred had we been prepared. It is my belief that adequate preparation would have prevented or materially shortened all of our other wars beginning with that of 1812. Yet, after each of our wars there has always been the hue and cry to the effect that there will be no more wars."

Conclusion

1. On more than one occasion I have been asked what the Bible teaches of war. In most cases the one questioning already has his mind made up thinking Christ's teachings would make war an anathema in a Christian nation.

2. I was reminded of my past experiences by an editorial written by Frank Turek in which he recalled being asked by a taxi driver "didn't Jesus tell us to love our enemies? And therefore ... war ... is wrong. What about loving your enemies?" I read with pleasure Mr. Turek's response:

"First 'loving your enemies,' like 'turn the other cheek,' is a command for individuals in personal relationships. It is not a command for governments or for individuals put in grave bodily harm. As individuals we should pray for our enemies and 'turn the other cheek' instead of returning insult for insult. Such behavior demonstrates supernatural love aimed at securing the offenders conversion to Christ. But those commands do not mean that we have no right to personal self-defense, nor do they mean that a nation should not protect its people from other hostile nations. Soldiers are needed because, as Paul pointed out in Romans Chapter 13, governments have a God given responsibility to use 'the sword' to protect their people from harm."

3. Mr. Turek went on to write:

"... love your enemies' cannot mean that all use of force is prohibited because such an interpretation would contradict the passages just cited and result in absurd conclusions. It would be absurd to say that 'love your enemies' means 'allow them to kill your family.' How would that be loving your family? It would be absurd to say that 'love your enemies' prohibits all wars. What about the war against Hitler? not justified? Please. How would that be loving to the Jews or the countries overrun?

4. And so I close as I began: **Freedom is never free!**

5. Let us pray:

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13.3 Nehemiah called the people to repentance and tapped into the power of God, prayer bombardment began and the divine power of the Lord was called in on top of the Arabs. Nehemiah and his men prayed first and then prepared for the battle. By their display of force, war was averted.

Neh 4:9 But we prayed to our God and posted a guard day and night to meet any threat.

13.4 Nehemiah could have been overwhelmed with gloom, fear, sadness and despair but trepidation was and should not be found in the sheath of the Christian soldier. And so it was with Nehemiah. Fear knocked at the door but courage answered.

Neh 4:7 ... when ... the Arabs... heard that the repairs to the walls were proceeding ... they were very angry ...

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1. On more than one occasion I have been asked what the Bible teaches of war. In most cases the one questioning already has his mind made up thinking Christ's teachings would make war an anathema in a Christian nation.

2. I was reminded of my past experiences by an editorial written by Frank Turek in which he recalled being asked by a taxi driver "didn't Jesus tell us to love our enemies? And therefore ... war ... is wrong. What about loving your enemies?" I read with pleasure Mr. Turek's response:

"First 'loving your enemies,' like 'turn the other cheek,' is a command for individuals in personal relationships. It is not a command for governments or for individuals put in grave bodily harm. As individuals we should pray for our enemies and 'turn the other cheek' instead of returning insult for insult. Such behavior demonstrates supernatural love aimed at securing the offenders conversion to Christ. But those commands do not mean that we have no right to personal self-defense, nor do they mean that a nation should not protect its people from other hostile nations. Soldiers are needed because, as Paul pointed out in Romans Chapter 13, governments have a God given responsibility to use 'the sword' to protect their people from harm."

3. Mr. Turek went on to write:

“... love your enemies’ cannot mean that all use of force is prohibited because such an interpretation would contradict the passages just cited and result in absurd conclusions. It would be absurd to say that ‘love your enemies’ means ‘allow them to kill your family.’ How would that be loving your family? It would be absurd to say that ‘love your enemies’ prohibits all wars. What about the war against Hitler? not justified? Please. How would that be loving to the Jews or the countries overrun?

4. And so I close as I began: **Freedom is never free!**

5. Let us pray:

Father, this morning we acknowledge that You reign in majesty and strength. The world You established cannot be moved. Your throne is forever; You are from eternity past before anything was. The seas lift up their voices in praise of Your name; the pounding of the waves give evidence of Your greatness.

The distant thunder gives indication of Your power. Your statutes stand forever. Holiness adorns Your presence and though the wicked spring up like grass and evildoers seem to flourish, they will soon be destroyed because You and You only are worthy. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen