

Freedom's Price and a Worthy Life 2

How grateful we are for the incredible freedoms we enjoy as Americans! With all of our troubles and problems we are still a blessed nation. May we faithfully continue to ask God to bless this nation and may we faithfully resolve to act in ways that will incur not his wrath, but his blessing and favor.

Tomorrow we celebrate the birth of a nation. 235 years ago committed and determined men gathered and gave eloquent expression to the deepest longings of humanity for justice and freedom. In preparing this message I realized I couldn't remember the last time I read the declaration of independence. Remember these words? "When in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separations. We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed... We therefore, the Representatives of the United States of America, in General Congress, Assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the name and by authority of the good people of these Colonies, solemnly publish and declare, that these United Colonies of the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain, is and ought to be totally dissolved; and that as free and independent States, they have full power to levy war, conclude peace, contract alliances, establish commerce, and to do all other acts and things which independent States may of right do. And for the support of this Declaration, ***"...with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes and our sacred honor."***

We celebrate tomorrow the land of the free, but don't forget freedom comes at a great cost. For more than two and a quarter centuries men and women have given their lives, their fortunes and their sacred honor – they have sacrificed all to pursue, protect and preserve this precious expression of our humanity: freedom. Generations of young men and women have left

the shores of America to fight against fascism and nazism, communism and terrorism in places like the Argonne in WWI, Normandy, Guadalcanal, Iwo Jima in WWII, Inchon in Korea, the jungles of Viet Nam, the mountains and deserts of Afghanistan and Iraq, thousands never to return or to return bearing the deep physical and emotional scars of war. We recognize humbly and with gratitude there is a price to be paid for our freedom. As we celebrate our freedoms we remember and honor those men and women who pledged their lives, fortunes and their sacred honor and especially those who made the ultimate sacrifice in order to secure that freedom and liberty for all of us. (One more time could we ask all of our service men and women, active, reservists and veterans to stand and let's show our appreciation.)

(A special salute to our WWII veterans.) Think for a moment. If brave men and women had not been willing to go and to stop Hitler and his axis of evil, what would have happened? How different would the world have been? I dare say we would not be living and enjoying the freedom we experience today. The literal truth is, someone died in order to secure our freedom. Someone died for you!

That brave soldier didn't stop to think whether you were worthy of his life or his sacrifice, he didn't stop to wonder if you would be grateful, thankful or even if you would stop to remember his sacrifice. He just died so you could be free. It is a humbling thing to be died for. It has an effect upon you. Or at least it should have. Someone died for you. It should effect how you live your life.

Those brave soldiers weren't the only ones that died for your freedom. There was another man who died so you could be free. This man was the sinless Son of God and he died so you could be free from the bondage to sin and death. He died so you could be free to experience life as God intended, free to enjoy his love for eternity.

There is no way we can ever repay him for what he did for us on Calvary. Even if we died for him, it would not be enough. It is not the same. It is not simply a life for a life – it is a sinless and perfect life for a sinful and messed up life.

I thought this week about how to illustrate this. Imagine if they had the Mona Lisa on display here in Tulsa and while viewing it I tripped and knocked it over and destroyed the painting, but then I said, no problem. I've got a little stick picture I painted, I'll just give that in exchange and we'll call it even. Really? It's not the same thing. I could never repaint the

picture or repay the price and neither can we ever repay the price Jesus paid as he gave his life and ransomed us from our sin. We can't earn our salvation. He is the perfect, sinless son of God and I'm offering a sinful stick figure in exchange. We can't pay him back. But we can acknowledge what he did for us and live a life worthy of the price that Jesus paid.

Paul speaks of Jesus' death and resurrection in Romans 8 and then he declares, in light of what Christ has done, **“therefore... we have an obligation” (Romans 8:12)** as to how we live our life. He says we are not to live it our own way, but to live a life that is pleasing to God. Someone died for you - it obligates you. We have a moral responsibility, a duty, to honor him with our very life.

Paul writes elsewhere, **“I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.” Ephesians 4:1**

“And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way.” Colossians 1:10

“... urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory.” 1 Thessalonians 2:12.

Live a life worthy of the Lord and the price he paid for your freedom. You see, we have an obligation. We owe him our life. We owe him everything. We owe a debt we cannot pay, but we can respond. We can surrender our life to him. We can say yes to him. We can live our lives in a way that brings honor and glory to the one who died for us. We can make choices that please him and that honor his words to us. We can treat each other as he taught us and by doing so, we honor his life given for us. We can stop rebelling and instead submit to his lordship in our life. We can live a life worthy of his calling, worthy of his sacrifice.

I urge you to live a life worthy of the Lord and his love for you and worthy of the price that he paid for you. What will that mean for you? How will you choose to live your life in light of the fact that someone died for you? Jesus said in Luke 12:48, to whom much is given, much is required. **Our freedom obligates us!**

I've shown this clip a couple of times but it's worth seeing again because it makes this point so powerfully. It's from the movie Saving Private Ryan. The movie featured Tom Hanks as Captain John H. Miller. Just after D-Day, Miller and seven of his men are sent in search of Private James Ryan. Private Ryan's three brothers had all been killed in action. 2 died at

Normandy and one died in the South Pacific. The army decided to send Private Ryan home and these 8 men are sent to find him and bring him back. In the movie 6 of the 8 men die in the process of saving Private Ryan.

I want you to see the last seven minutes of this movie. The clip will begin with Captain Miller on a bridge. They have found Ryan, but Miller has been seriously wounded and is about to die. Another soldier is trying to help him and Private Ryan is standing above him. Make special note of what Capt. Miller says to Ryan in the opening scene. He pulls him close and says, "Earn this." He and his men died to find him and bring him back. Earn this. Live a life worthy of the sacrifice that has been made for you.

You will then see the years pass forward 50 years and Private Ryan and his family are at Normandy in the cemetery, in front of Captain Miller's gravemarker. You will hear the words of the letter that General George Marshall sent to Private Ryan's mother. Watch this clip.

I hope you could hear what the older Private Ryan said as he knelt at the grave marker. "I've thought of what you said to me on the bridge every day of my life. I hope I earned, in your eyes, what you all did for me." I hope I've lived a good life.

Private Ryan kneels at a cross and talks to a man that died to find him and save him from combat. Today we kneel before another cross. We kneel before the cross upon which Jesus died to save us from our sin and to rescue us from an eternity in hell. I wonder if today we can say something similar to what Private Ryan said? "I think about what you did for me everyday. I remember your sacrifice for me every day. I want to live my life in a way that is worthy of your sacrifice – worthy of what you did for me on Calvary."

We have been died for. We have an obligation. Someone died so we could be free! How will we live our lives in response to that? Freedom's price and a worthy life.

"Earn this" Capt. Miller said. We can't earn salvation. We can't repay the debt owed for our freedom. But we can live a life worthy of the price that was paid as we give to Jesus our all.

"I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received"

"And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way..." Colossians 1:10