

The Day of Independence

We live in land under a government that is truly unique amongst the powers of the world. This is a land rich with natural resources which the people, its citizens have been free to exploit, to utilize, and to capitalize on, too much so, some might say. This is a land where among its founding principles are certain unalienable rights that are its citizen's. We have the right to speak our minds, freedom of speech, we have the right to worship as we please, freedom of religion, we have the right to move about the country and live where we choose, and we have the right to bear arms, though many of these rights are being challenged in the courts and legislature, even as we speak. These are the rights that as citizens of the United States of America, plus many, many more have been given to us by those men who first resisted the rule of the British government. These men took stock of the lives of themselves as well as the rest of their countrymen and decided that to continue under the rule of the British was to continue under the rule of oppression. Beginning in 1775, and even before that, but traceable to then, history tells that unrest began to grow with the decisions that were coming from across the water in England. For more than a decade before the outbreak of the American Revolution in 1775, tensions had been building between the colonists and the British authorities. Attempts by the British government to raise revenue by taxing the colonies, notably the Stamp Act of 1765, the Townshend Tariffs of 1767 and the Tea Act of 1773, met with heated protest among many colonists, who resented their lack of representation in Parliament and demanded the same rights as other British subjects. Colonial resistance led to violence in 1770, when British soldiers opened fire on a mob of colonists, killing five men in what was known as the Boston Massacre. After December 1773, when a band of Bostonians dressed as Mohawk Indians boarded British ships and dumped 342 chests of tea into Boston Harbor, an outraged Parliament passed a series of measures, known as the Intolerable, or Coercive Acts, designed to reassert imperial authority in Massachusetts. In response, a group of colonial delegates, including George Washington of Virginia, John and Samuel Adams of Massachusetts, Patrick Henry of Virginia and John Jay of New York, met in Philadelphia in September of 1774 to give voice to their grievances against the British crown. This First Continental Congress did not go so far as to demand independence from Britain, but it denounced taxation without representation, as well as the maintenance of the British army in the colonies without their consent, and issued a declaration of the rights due every citizen, including life, liberty, property, assembly and trial by jury. The Continental Congress voted to meet again in May 1775 to consider further action, but by that time violence had already broken out. On April 19, 1774, local militiamen clashed with British soldiers in Lexington and Concord, Massachusetts, marking them as the first shots fired in the Revolutionary War.

When the Second Continental Congress convened in Philadelphia, delegates, including new additions Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson, voted to form a Continental Army, with Washington as its commander in chief. On June 17, in the Revolution's first major battle, colonial forces inflicted heavy casualties on the British regiment of General William Howe at Breed's Hill in Boston. The engagement, now known as the Battle of Bunker Hill, ended in British victory, but lent encouragement to the revolutionary cause. Throughout that fall and winter, Washington's forces struggled to keep the British contained in Boston, but artillery captured at Fort Ticonderoga in New

York helped shift the balance of that struggle in late winter. The British evacuated the city in March 1776, with Howe and his men retreating to Canada to prepare a major invasion of New York. By June 1776, with the Revolutionary War in full swing, a growing majority of the colonists had come to favor independence from Britain. On July 4, the Continental Congress voted to adopt the Declaration of Independence, drafted by a five-man committee including Franklin and John Adams but written mainly by Jefferson. That same month, determined to crush the rebellion, the British government sent a large fleet, along with more than 34,000 troops to New York. In August, Howe's Redcoats routed the Continental Army on Long Island; Washington was forced to evacuate his troops from New York City by September. Pushed across the Delaware River, Washington fought back with a surprise attack in Trenton, New Jersey, on Christmas night and won another victory at Princeton to revive the rebels' flagging hopes before making winter quarters at Morristown. This is what started the bloody war that resulted in the establishment of the United States of America as a free and viable nation and government.

That is what is going to be celebrated tomorrow. The determination and sacrifice of so many to stand up and proclaim themselves to be free, free from oppression, free from unfair rule. Consider for just a moment the awful cost of the freedom we now enjoy:

Over the course of the war, about 231,000 men served in the Continental Army, though never more than 48,000 at any one time, and never more than 13,000 at any one place. The sum of the Colonial militias numbered upwards of 145,000 men. France also dispatched a substantial force to North America beginning in 1779, with more than 12,000 soldiers and a substantial fleet joining the Colonial Americans by wars end.

At its peak, the British Army had upwards of 22,000 men at its disposal in North America to combat the rebellion. An additional 25,000 Loyalists, faithful to Great Britain, participated in the conflict as well. Nearly 30,000 German auxiliaries, or Hessians, were hired out by German princes and served alongside the British for the duration of the war.

The tragic loss of life in the revolutionary war needs to be measured against the concurrent populations of the respective combatants: according to the best guesses, at the time of the war, the Americas totaled about 2.5 million, of which about half a million were slaves. According to the best records available Great Britain had about 8 million residents in 1775. Of those populations, throughout the course of the war, an estimated 6,800 Americans were killed in action, 6,100 wounded, and upwards of 20,000 were taken prisoner. Historians believe that at least an additional 17,000 deaths were the result of disease, including about 8,000 - 12,000 who died while prisoners of war, 29,900 lives that were lost just on the American side. The casualties of the British, based on very unreliable data, places the total casualties for British regulars fighting in the Revolutionary War at around 24,000 men. If you include the approximate 7,500 foreign soldiers, you get about 61,000 dead or wounded as a direct result of the conflict. The population of America and Britain totaled about 10,500 million people, if you include the slaves. When you look at these statistics, the Revolutionary War ranks as one of the worst losses of life percentage wise, in any war America has fought.

Why? What did their deaths buy? What is the value of the freedom they gave their lives for? We sit here right now because of the freedom that they, and all the others who have given their lives for the freedom we enjoy. Tomorrow we celebrate this nation's independence from British rule

as well as all those who have served, are serving, and will serve this country as part of her armed forces. May God bless America.

This isn't intended to be a history lesson or some patriotic rah rah speech, but I do think there are some thoughts in this discussion about this country's independence that we can learn from...

- 2) 1) The Decision to pursue Independence
- 2) 2) The Sacrifice required for Independence
- 3) 3) The Effort needed to enjoy Independence

The term independence is defined as...

- 3) A) The time when a country or region gains political freedom from outside control

Obviously this definition is what we have been talking about, but the next one, I think, is most relevant to our discussion...

- 4) B) Freedom from outside control or support: the state of being independent

When the Continental congress met, the decision was made that it was time for the American colonies to have representation in the British parliament. Even though they didn't decide to have an armed conflict that essentially was what England heard, regardless...

- 5) 1) The decision to pursue Independence

Was made. It was time for America to recognize her position and to do something about it. The founding fathers looked around at the situations and circumstances and knew it was time for freedom. What are the circumstances that make us realize that it is time for freedom from our sin? What are the factors that will motivate us to decide to be free? Remember the definition of independence? When do we decide we have had enough of the outside influences of the world keeping us in slavery?

Acts 2:37

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37 Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?"

What was it that caused these Jews to decide that it was time for them to do something? When the Ethiopian Eunuch asked Philip to be baptized, what was it that made him know it was time? Note...

Acts 2:41-42

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41 So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls. 42 They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

Those that received the word were baptized. It was the word that convinced them it was time to be free.

1 Cor 1:18

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18 For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

It is the word of God

Gal 5:1 9

1 It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery.

Christ has set us free. He has purchased His followers so that they would no longer be slaves to the world of sin.

1 Cor 7:22-23 10

22 For he who was called in the Lord while a slave, is the Lord's freedman; likewise he who was called while free, is Christ's slave. **23** You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of men.

We spoke of the sacrifice of so many who gave themselves to win the freedom that we enjoy. Our next point...

11 2) The Sacrifice required for Independence

This addresses the sacrifice that purchased us out of slavery into freedom. Christ made the sacrifice, the only sacrifice that could, that made man's freedom from sin possible.

Titus 2:11-14 12

11 For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, **12** instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, **13** looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, **14** who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.

Paul, in his letter to Titus, says that it was the grace of God that appeared and brought salvation to all men. When you combine that with the passages that we have already looked at and with John 3:16, it becomes obvious that the grace of God that Paul is talking is the love and unmerited favor that sent His Son to die for our sin.

Heb 10:11-12 13

11 Every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; **12** but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, SAT DOWN AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD,

The Hebrew writer illustrates that it was the sacrifice of Jesus Christ that paid the price for the sins of man. But what did He sacrifice? Have you ever really thought about that? We read the accounts in the Gospels that tell us about the torture and physical abuse that Jesus had to endure. We have heard the description of what being hung on a cross is like, the horrendous pain of trying to force your body to lift by pulling and pushing against the nails that hold you to the cross just so you can take a breath. Was this this the sacrifice that Christ was praying about in the Garden the night He was betrayed? Note what Christ had to say that night...

Luke 22:41-44 14

41 And He withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and He knelt down and began to pray, **42** saying, "Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done." **43** Now an angel from heaven appeared to Him, strengthening Him. **44** And being in agony He was praying very fervently; and His sweat became like drops of blood, falling down upon the ground.

Does this sound like a man who was so afraid of the physical pain of dying that He begged His Father to release Him from the impending events? He sweated like drops of blood because of His agony.

Phil 2:5-8

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5 Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, **6** who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, **7** but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. **8** Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Christ could have clung to His deity, but He knew that there could be no freedom from sin for man if He had. He paid the price required by the penalty for sin, that of physical death and He paid the price that is required by the penalty of sin, spiritual death.

Rom 6:23

16

23 For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Sin causes death, that is the penalty that Christ had to pay. His sacrifice wasn't that he had to endure the physical anguish of the cross and the torture leading up to it, that wasn't what He didn't want to face, it was the separation from His Father, demanded by sin, a separation that He had never felt and was going to have to endure, because I, we, man sins. As the sacrifice of so many through the years have ensured the freedoms we enjoy, it was the sacrifice of one man, one Son of God, Jesus Christ, that can ensure our freedom from sin and a home eternal in heaven. This brings us to our last point...

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3) The Effort needed to enjoy Independence

The hard fought Independence of the United States should never be taken for granted. It is not one of the inalienable rights we talked about earlier. It needs to be nurtured, it needs to be maintained, it needs to be worked at constantly, or the rights of Independence begin to be eroded and taken away, so that soon that very freedom that has been fought for becomes a form of slavery in itself. In the same way, if we make no effort to nurture, maintain, and work at the freedom from sin that Christ sacrificed so much for, we can fall back into the depths of the degradation of sin, we can fall right back into the slavery Christ freed us from.

The only question left is, will today be your...

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Independence Day ???