

Auburn Baptist Church
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July 1, 2018

I Pledge Allegiance to The Lamb

Galatians 2:20; Joshua 24:15

On Wednesday our country celebrated its 242nd birthday. Around this holiday Americans become patriotic and proud of the wonderful country they live in. Unfortunately, today, patriotism for one's country has more to do with emotion than it does with loyalty and commitment. But despite this fact, America is still one of the greatest countries on earth. A country founded, rooted and established on Christian principles.

In his farewell address to the nation George Washington said, *"Do not let anyone claim tribute of American patriotism if they even attempt to remove religion from politics."*

President Thomas Jefferson in a letter to Danbury Baptists said these famous though often misquoted and misinterpreted words. *"The 1st amendment has created a wall of separation between church and state, but that wall is a one directional wall, it keeps the government from running the church, but it makes sure that Christian principles will always stay in government."*

Despite what modern politicians, the contemporary media or historical revisionists say America was founded not on the concept of freedom to worship any god, but on the freedom to worship the One true God, Jesus Christ, without interference from the government.

As we approach the anniversary date of the signing of our Declaration of Independence, let's look at the parallels between our founding fathers' allegiance to this country and our allegiance to the Lamb, Jesus Christ the Son of God.

I. WE'VE BOTH MADE BOLD DECLARATIONS

A. THE PATRIOTS

Our American forefathers, made a bold declaration for freedom. For more than 14 months after the Battles at Lexington and Concord (April 19, 1775) the patriots fought not for their independence, but rather they fought for their rights within the British Empire - rights that had been gradually taken away from them over the course of time. Hundreds of colonists gave their lives to regain these rights. In just the Battle of Bunker Hill 400 men died.

It was during this early time of conflict that Patrick Henry, the fiery politician from Virginia, gave his famous speech before the Virginia Provincial Convention. Here is how he concluded it: *"Gentleman may cry peace, peace, but there is no peace. The war has actually begun! Our brethren are already in the field! Why stand we here idle? What is it that gentleman wish? What would they have? Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and*

slavery? Forbid it, almighty God! I know not what course others may take, but as for me, give me liberty, or give me death."

Then early in the summer of 1776 at a meeting of the Continental Congress on July 2, 1776, the colonies voted to announce and declare, that they would accept nothing less than absolute freedom from England. That's a bold declaration! Two days later, on July 4th, after making some minor adjustments to the text, the final wording was ratified and signed by the 56 members of the Congress, representing the 13 colonies.

After the Declaration of Independence was signed couriers took copies of it to George Washington who was with his troops in New York. And on July 9th the declaration was read before the militia troops who were out in the fields. The patriots made a bold declaration. They pledged their life and their allegiance to their country.

B. THE CHRISTIAN

If you are here today and you call yourself a Christian, then YOU TOO have made a bold declaration.

Do you remember the day, when you stood before the body of Christ, when you came forward and confessed Jesus as your Lord and Savior? Do you remember proclaiming your desire to be a Christian, to be united with Christ, to be bathed in His blood? Courageously announcing that nothing but absolute independence from the shackles of sin and the ways of this world would be acceptable.

Do you remember the day when you made that good confession, "I believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God, and I receive Him as my Lord and Savior"? When you repented of your sins and were buried with Christ in baptism and were raised to live a new life? In doing this, you too were making a bold declaration.

You were at that time pledging your allegiance, your devotion, loyalty, dedication, commitment, even your very life, to the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ. Understand that you were at that time proclaiming what Paul proclaimed in **Galatians 2:20**, "**I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God who loves me and gave himself for me...**"

It is a very bold declaration to say that you will no longer live for yourself, that you will no longer seek your own will for your life, that you will no longer live for the things of the world like power, pleasure, popularity and possessions. It is a very bold declaration to say that you will seek God's will for your life, seek to do what pleases Him far and above what pleases you.

This declaration is as bold and as powerful as the one Joshua made in **Joshua 24:14-15**, when God's people had conquered the promise land and were beginning to settle down. "**Now fear the Lord and serve Him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your forefathers worshiped**

beyond the River and in Egypt and serve the Lord. But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord."

When you came to Christ, when you pledged your allegiance to the Lamb, you were making a very bold declaration. Just as our forefathers did when they created and signed the Declaration of Independence.

II. WE BOTH PAY A HIGH PRICE

Another parallel between our forefather's allegiance to their country and a Christian's allegiance to the Lamb of God is the high price we have to pay for our allegiance.

A. THE PATRIOTS

Understand that when our forefathers signed proclaimed their independence from England they were challenging the most powerful empire of the world at the time. And they entered into war without a navy or an army. Their fighting forces consisted only of militia units in the various colonies. England, on the other hand, had an army of well-trained highly disciplined soldiers.

After the Americans declared their independence, they then had to win it by force. The task proved especially difficult, partly because the people never fully united behind the war effort. A large number of colonists (about 1/3) remained unconcerned about the outcome of the war. They were indifferent and supported neither side.

Another 1/3 of the population sympathized with Great Britain. They called themselves loyalists. This meant that victory in the Revolutionary War, depended on patriots who made up less than 1/3 of the entire population. 7,200 Americans were killed in battle during the Revolutionary War. 8,200 were wounded. 10,000 died from disease and exposure. Nearly 3,000 men died at Valley Forge alone. An additional 6,500 died in prison after being captured, and 1,400 soldiers were listed as missing.

Of the 56 men who signed the Declaration of Independence, five were captured by the British and tortured before they died. Twelve had their homes ransacked and burned. Two lost their sons in battle. Another two had sons that were captured. Nine of the 56 went into battle themselves and died from wounds sustained in the war.

Carter Braxton of Virginia, a wealthy planter and trader, saw his ships sunk by the British Navy. He sold his home and properties to pay his debts and died in poverty. At the battle of Yorktown, the British General Cornwallis had taken over Thomas Nelson's home for his headquarters. Nelson quietly ordered George Washington to open fire on his own home. The home was destroyed, and Nelson died bankrupt.

You see it's one thing to make a bold declaration in the comfort of a congressional meeting, but it's quite another to pay the price to fulfill that declaration on the field of battle, and to pay for it with blood; - yours - your families - and your neighbors. Our founding fathers made a bold declaration, and they paid a high price for it.

B. THE CHRISTIAN

Likewise, Christian, it's one thing, to make a bold declaration in the comfort of a church building, but it is quite another to live up to it, to pay the price, and to fulfill that declaration on the battlefields of our daily lives. Most times saying the words is the easy part. The actions are much tougher. But wars are not won by those who only make declarations, who only make claims, who only speak words. No, victory is seldom achieved by those who lift only their voices.

Unfortunately, we who are in the Lord's Army find, just like the patriots found in the American Revolution, that our war is hard to win. For one thing, in our bold declaration we are challenging an empire that is very powerful. We are declaring war against, **"the rulers, the authorities, the powers of this dark world, we are taking a stand against spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms..." (Ephesians 6:12)**. There are real battles to be fought, real struggles to overcome. We are called in Scripture to, **"finish the race," "to fight the good fight," "to endure hardships like a good soldier" (1 Timothy 4:7)**.

We are in a real war, and we have a real enemy. He does not like it when someone opposes, challenges, or defies him. Our enemy, Satan, will attack us, pursue us, and tempt us. He will try to make sin look good. He will, at times, come at us head on just like a roaring lion, and at other times he will appear as an angel of light.

And not only is the war hard to win because we have a powerful enemy, but another reason is because not everyone is committed to the war effort. Not everyone who claimed Jesus was their Lord one day in the assembly has lived up to it in their daily lives.

Yes, some are just like the "Loyalists" and are still loyal to our enemy, to sin, and Satan. They still serve him, worship him, and give their best efforts and time to him. Others are like that apathetic 1/3 of the colonists, unconcerned about the outcome of the war. They are indifferent. They are uninvolved. Now they may not directly hinder the war effort, and they will certainly want to take part in any benefits, but they will not join in. They will not leave their comfort and safety. They simply watch and critique from the sidelines.

Let's make no mistake about it - there is a high price to pay to fulfill our declaration - **THAT JESUS IS OUR LORD**. Our Lord demands total, radical, unswerving allegiance and the fact that He does, is no secret. Jesus made this clear to us when He walked the earth.

Luke 9:23-26, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life

for me will save it. What good is it for a man to gain the whole world and yet lose or forfeit his very self? If anyone is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his glory and in the glory of the father and of the holy angels."

Now that's pretty clear. There are also severe warnings in Scripture about those who merely make the declaration, who speak only the words, who only make the claim.

Titus 1:16, "They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him. They are detestable, disobedient and unfit for anything good."

"I believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God and I receive Him as my Savior and Lord!" That's a bold declaration! And to pick up your cross daily, to deny self, to die to self is a high price to pay. But the reward we shall reap is a great one.

III. WE BOTH REAP GREAT REWARDS

A. THE PATRIOTS

The Americans had made a bold declaration. They paid a high price. And they reaped a great reward. They won their freedom, their independence. And a particular kind of nation was established, a nation where every human being could be free, and have something to say about how they were governed.

But not only did the patriots win their freedom, but at the Treaty of Paris in 1783, the US territory doubled in size as Britain gave the new nation all of the land to the east of the Mississippi River.

And though many signers of that Great Declaration paid a high price, others reaped a great reward. Two of the signers became Presidents, ten US Congressmen, 19 judges, 16 became governors, and dozens of others held other high political offices.

The Patriots, our forefathers, made the declaration of freedom, paid the price, and reaped the reward of freedom, a new land, a new country, a bright future, and a new beginning.

B. THE CHRISTIAN

Christians have also made a declaration, are paying the price for it, and are reaping and will reap a great reward for our loyalty.

John 8:36, "So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed..."

Romans 8:1, "Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."

Those who make this declaration and die to themselves win their freedom from sin, death, and condemnation. And a particular kind of church will be established, where all people can come to

know Jesus as Lord.

And that is not all. One day we will reap what is perhaps the greatest reward of all. One day we will stand before the Lord and all His glory and receive the crown of life which He gives to those who love Him and long for His coming.

Romans 8:18, "I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us."

1 Peter 1:3-4, "He has given us new birth into a living hope...and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade - kept in heaven for you..."

So, when we remember the great sacrifices made by our forefathers for our benefit, let us also remember our own pledges of allegiance to the Lamb of God. Make sure that the declaration to follow Christ as Lord of your life was not just a mere recitation of words, but a commitment of your entire life.

Don't falter at paying the heavy price of this allegiance. Nothing on earth can compare to your future inheritance. Get yourself out of the way. Die daily to your own desires and wills so that in the end you can reap the great rewards that God has waiting for you in heaven. And we too will hear those most precious words of the ages, **(Matthew 25:21,)"Well done, good and faithful servant."**

(Adapted from a sermon by Steve Malone)