

## The Summertime Soldier And Sunshine Patriotism

Laying Down One's Life For the Kingdom of God

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Given 13-Sep-07; Sermon #847B

During the American Revolutionary War there was a great deal of patriotic courage shown by many, whether on the battlefield or in the halls and meeting rooms of those buildings with the political and economic leadership of the then forming nation which was planning the necessary move. There was very little media covering the actual battle, and so the valor shown on the battlefields is pretty much limited to George Washington and maybe just a few others.

Much of the sacrificial service given to win that war was made by the 56 signers of the Declaration of Independence. They had very much to lose. Most of those men had a great deal of higher education. They had substantial material wealth derived from thriving business ventures, and they had solid large families. But by signing that document, they voluntarily set themselves up as fair game in the dangers of what the British rightfully viewed as a traitorous sedition.

Most of those men and their families paid dearly. Except for the flowery signature of John Hancock, you probably cannot remember but one or two others of the 56 signers' names, but all 56 knew that when they signed that document they might have very well been signing their own death warrant. But they were willing to lay down their lives to be free.

Because of the inherent dangers of signing, the signers' names were kept secret for six months in order to give them time to get things at home in order and to flee to wherever they felt they might be safe. Twenty-four of them were lawyers and judges. Nine of them were plantation owners. The rest were notable, but from other business fields. From the point of their signing becoming known, they lived as vagabonds, fleeing and in hiding, always in some state of apprehension that they would be found, tried, and put to death as traitors.

The deaths of nine of them were directly attributable to the war. Others died from lingering illnesses and injuries that took place during the war. And some, though not put to death, were nonetheless tortured, and the homes of just about every one of them was ransacked and burned.

Even if they had not been directly harassed, what they committed their lives to triggered long periods of separation from their loved ones, as was the case with John and Abigail

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Adams, as he attempted to give direction and to find financial resources for the military effort that the Continental Army under George Washington might use.

You may be unable to quote a single line of the Declaration, but those signers knew from the tenor of the times, as well as the lofty and challenging statements contained within the Declaration, that they were lighting the fuse to the explosion that would blow the lid off an already tense relationship between the two countries.

There is one line in the final paragraph of the Declaration of Independence that I hope you would never forget, because it has direct application to us. It should be remembered, because, with *our* declaration we believe in the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and thus followed that up with baptism. We committed ourselves to a covenant that calls for unswerving loyalty to Him. That line in the Declaration says, "We mutually pledge each other our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor."

The "each other" in that pledge, as it points to us, points primarily to the Father and to the Son, but as we will see later, it also extends to the brethren.

Our war is not a bloody one. It is not a conflict involving bombs and rifles, but a conflict over control of our mind, our heart, and its direction of our attitude and conduct.

Some of the impetus for this sermon came from a statement that Richard made in his sermon in which he used the "300" movie as an illustration. He said that the author of the book on which the movie was based said that the Spartans chose to fight the battle at Thermopylae because they were free, and they wanted to remain free. Other Grecian cities were distracted by the Olympic games, and so Athens and Corinth and any others sent just a couple of people to go fight the battle for the survival of *all* of Greece. This aroused my curiosity regarding us and God's Word.

I want you to turn with me to Luke 14.

**Luke 14:25-27** And there went great multitudes with him: and he turned, and said unto them, If any man come to me and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever does not bear his cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple.

**Matthew 10:34-39** Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in

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law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. He that loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that takes not his cross and follows after me, is not worthy of me. He that finds his life shall lose it: and he that loses his life for my sake shall find it.

Connecting verse 25 of Luke 14 with verses 26 and 27 is very interesting, because there were great multitudes following after Him. The word about Him was spreading all over Judea and Galilee, and people were intrigued, and so they wanted to hear Him speak.

The normal and natural thing for most men in that kind of a position was, "Hey! I've got all these people following after me. I'd better tone things down a little bit so that I don't lose anybody. I'll be able to please everybody out there because everybody will start to find a way in which they can compromise a little bit." And that is the way it goes. But you see, He did not compromise one iota. He demanded of us a devoted loyalty that is to exceed any human connection or any thing on earth.

We are to pledge to Him *everything* we are, and *everything* we have. It is no wonder that Jesus said this way is difficult, because that is not the way we are by nature. By nature we are always looking out to protect the self and those things that we hold dear, and so He is telling us that we have to hold *Him* dear above everything else; otherwise our following of Him may not work.

In Matthew 10, He added to this that we have to do this daily. We have to pick up our cross and follow Him, and the cross symbolizes anything, any kind of pain, any kind of sacrifice that comes our way as a result of following after *Him*, and so the stakes here are high. In one sense they are every bit as high, if not higher, than the 56 signers of the Declaration of Independence. Everything is on the line for us in that regard.

I want to return in thought to the Revolutionary War again because one must not forget that when those battles were fought, we were not even a country. We were only colonies of England, and we were not united, and as such, a great deal of organization between the thirteen colonies did not exist. The only thing that held them together was a common vision and a commitment to concepts within that vision—concepts that they incidentally held as ideals that were worth sacrificing for.

The colonies had no central government. They had no standing army. All they had was a fighting force made up of the thirteen state militias and promises from the leadership

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of those thirteen colonies to supply whatever they could. Their promises were more or less vague declarations, because none of the leadership of any of the colonies was sure that they could actually back what they promised.

Any given militia might be fairly-well organized and even fairly well trained; however militias are usually small and by no means are they a regular standing army consisting of a force of men whose full-time occupation is as a soldier. Militias are usually a force of somewhat trained volunteers called into service only in an emergency.

Now within this loosely-woven environment arose Thomas Paine. Paine was English born. He was a journalist who emigrated to the colonies in 1774 with a letter of recommendation in his pocket from Benjamin Franklin. Somehow those two met one another. Paine began publishing a pamphlet titled *Common Sense* in which his articles at first urged reconciliation between the antagonists, but the battles of Lexington and Concord in 1775 enflamed his sense of British injustices done, and he became solidly on the colonists' side.

In January of 1776, *Common Sense* articles began to strongly call for independence, enflaming the nation in that direction. Paine is noted for vivid metaphors and rational directness that people clearly understood. In December of 1776, he began publishing a series of articles in *Common Sense* titled "The Crisis," and from the first of those articles comes this memorable declaration he made while he was serving in the Continental Army. He was in the army and he was writing at the same time. He said:

These are the times that try men's souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of his country; but he that stands it now deserves the love and thanks of man and woman. Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered, yet we have this consolation with us that the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph.

It is the "summer soldier and the sunshine patriot" metaphor that gets my attention at this time. This metaphor arose because fighting in the armed services at that time was far different from what it is today. This is because the Continental Army was made up almost entirely of volunteers. Pay was extremely low. I mean *low*. Just to give you a little comparison, when the United States went into the Second World War in 1941, a buck private in the army earned \$21.00 a month.

Now imagine how low the pay was for those men who had volunteered and who almost never showed up. And so as Yanks are, they figured out a way around it as best they

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could. Here is what they did. To accommodate this, the soldiers volunteered for only short periods of active duty so they could leave and go home and take care of the farm. If the volunteer needed to plow or plant, he got up, left the army and the war and went home. If he needed to harvest, he got up, left the army and the war, and went home.

It is said that George Washington wore a wig. No wonder, with an army like that! Actually, the records show that he was really patient with it. He understood and did the best that they could.

The result of this was that the only time soldiers who fit that description could be depended upon was either in the dead of winter or in the summertime when the crops were growing to maturity and did not need much tending, and thus the metaphor "Summer Soldier and Sunshine Patriot." These were part-time soldiers who could not be depended upon. Their attention was divided. How could a war be won in that situation? The only way is miraculously. God gave the colonies the victory, with the help of the French. We would not have won without them. That is no kidding!

The Feast of Trumpets speaks to us of an especially tense period of time in the history of mankind—a time unequaled in man's history in terms of the intensity of destructive power of war, combined with natural disasters like drought, famine, earthquakes, and disease.

The literal fulfillment of Trumpets is preceded by the worst of times in all of mankind's history (Jeremiah 31) and thus these times will surely try men's souls beyond what Thomas Paine and the colonists experienced. How deeply the Christian's involvement is going to be depends upon factors that we cannot specifically see at this time, but regardless of whether his involvement is directly in it, or in the times leading up to it, much sacrifice and courage will probably be demanded of him.

Thomas Paine wrote of patriotism, encouraging the colonists to give more of themselves in sacrificial service to the demands of the forming nation's cause.

Wikipedia says this regarding patriotism:

Patriotism denotes positive and supportive attitudes to a fatherland. It covers such attitudes as pride in its achievements and culture, the desire to preserve its character and the basis of the culture, and identification with other members of the nation.

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Through its roots, *patriot* is related to *patrician*, *patriarch*, *expatriate*, *repatriate*, *perpetuate*, *pattern*, and even the name Patrick, all of which are an extension of the root-word father (*patriae* in Latin), and thus *patriot* is a term indicating kinship, relationship, association, affinity, membership, and similarity with family ties. Are we part of the family of Jesus Christ? Think about it.

Regarding the ethics of patriotism, Wikipedia states this:

The primary implication in ethical theory is that a person has more moral duty to fellow members of a national community than to non-members. Patriotism is selective in its altruism. Patriotism implies a selective value preference for a specific civic or political community.

Here are five quotes:

1. "I only regret that I have but one life to lose for my country." So said Nathan Hale during the Revolutionary War as he was about to be hanged by the British as an American spy at age 21.

Everybody here ought to be able to recognize this next quote.

2: "And so my fellow Americans, ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country." John F. Kennedy during his inaugural address as President, January, 1961.

3: "Patriotism is easy to understand in America. It means looking out for yourself by looking out for your country." Calvin Coolidge, 30<sup>th</sup> President of the United States, in 1925.

Now here is a twist.

4: "Heroism on command, senseless violence, and all of the loathsome nonsense that goes by the name of patriotism—how passionately I hate them!" Albert Einstein, scientist.

I guess he was a citizen of the world.

5: "To me it seems a dreadful indignity to have a soul controlled by geography." George Santayana, American philosopher.

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**Romans 5:6-8** For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commends his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

In verse 6, the only thing I want to pick out here are the words "in due time." It means "at the appointed time Christ died," or it can also mean "at the right time Christ died."

The next thing is in verse 7: "For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet perhaps for a good man some would even dare to die." Paul is making a really interesting comparison here between the words "righteous" and "good." What it does is it shows one of the perversities of human nature and its patriotism. And this is it, that normally one will not sacrifice his life for a person who is truly righteous. Why? Because the world is the enemy of those who are righteous, and so if a person is truly righteous, the world tends to look at that person as expendable, so why go to his aid or why go to his defense?

But the perversity continues on. "But for a good man . . ." Who would human nature think of a good man as being? Our tendency right off the bat is usually someone who is keeping the commandments and is kind, or whatever. That may be actually part of the equation, but what Paul is setting up here is that a man will give his life for one he considers to be a benefactor—his payback. That is one of the perversities of human nature. The patriotism is adjustable to the circumstance and the situation. That is why you would have somebody like Einstein or Santayana saying something like they did because they see a perversity there that they cannot do anything about except run it down. Well, Paul gives us an explanation there.

Under the influence of patriotism, people of all nations have performed many heroic acts through the centuries, most notably during warfare. Patriotism is heavily fueled by one's emotions, because one perceives his nation as more or less wholly good, and the one being warred against as wholly bad or evil. This is why Wikipedia says that patriotism is selective, and God agrees. We just read a verse there where God agreed with that. It is selective.

Jesus died for **everybody**. And He died for all of us, not while we were good. It was not payback in any way on His part. He just laid down His life regardless of whether the person was righteous or evil. That is a patriotism that is far above the normal patriotism of a carnal human being, because it looks far beyond what the person is right now. It

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looks to what the person *can* be, and so He voluntarily, willingly, laid down His life, looking to the future; thus the comments of Albert Einstein and George Santayana saying patriotism motivates senseless violence and loathsome nonsense, and being one that is confined to geography.

There is good sense in what those men said. Even though we may not agree with it fully, and may be somewhat repulsed at what they said, yet what they said is essentially true because it is largely fueled by self-centeredness in that the entire nation is perceived as an extension of the self, and thus patriotism tied with expressing kinship is established.

Calvin Coolidge's comment that patriotism means looking out for yourself while looking out for your country is also a true statement as well, but it is also narrow in its approach by comparison to what Jesus said. With this mix of understanding and emotion, it can issue forth in selfless devotion, and thus the comment of Nathan Hale who regretted that he had only one life to give for his country.

Patriotism is not limited to people who are in the armed services. I experienced a small amount of this as I was growing up during World War II. In reflecting back on it, I can see that ordinary citizens not on the battlefield also came to the fore during that period of time. Sugar, butter, flour, and meat were rationed. Gasoline was severely rationed. I heard on the radio the other day some old timer, who was probably 74, say something that I did not remember, that during the Second World War the national speed limit was 35 mph. When it was 55 mph, I had a hard time out on the highway holding those cars back.

But you see, people were capable during that period of time, seeing that the nation was in trouble, seeing that those food stuffs and the gasoline and maybe many other things beside had to be expendable for them in order for those things to be given to the troops so that the war could be fought and we could remain free. I would have to say, from my experience then, that by and large, people cooperated.

What you had to do, though, was to go to a local war board to explain your situation, the size of your family, the amount of driving you did and so forth, and then they would issue to you coupons to a certain extent so that you could buy one pound of sugar or one pound of shortening of some kind every so often. All I remember is that my dad got a B sticker for gasoline, but those things were in short supply. The people took a stiff upper lip kind of thing, and I am absolutely certain that the British people had to sacrifice a great deal more than we did by far.



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A major contribution to the war effort then was that a huge number of women moved into the work force to replace men in the factories. I am sure that you heard of Rosie the Riveter and Rosie the Welder, and so forth and so on, because they were there.

What I am saying is this: If there is a place for patriotism in the individual Christian in the church of God—the true patriotism that Christ showed—it will have these two defining characteristics: (1) It cannot be forced. (2) It is built and sustained by truth that is believed, understood, and issues forth in love. We are going to look at the first one through Jesus' example.

Turn to John 10. This is the chapter in which Jesus characterizes Himself as the Shepherd of the sheep.

**John 10:11** I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd gives his life for the sheep.

**John 10:15** As the Father knows me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep.

**John 10:17-18** Therefore does my Father love me because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man takes it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.

His example is the very pinnacle of acts taken in behalf of His nation. One of the more interesting aspects of what Jesus did in laying down His life is found in verse 18 in the word translated "power." "I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." What we want to do is tie this to the word "commandment," which is also in verse 18. Some translations may change that word to "charge" or "order." The English word "power" is a translation of the Greek word *exousia*.

**John 8:29** And he that sent me is with me: the Father has not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him.

**John 1:12** But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.

The *King James Version* makes it seem that since Jesus always did what pleased the

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Father (which John 8:29 clearly states), that He had no choice in this matter of laying down His life, that we could think that His supreme act was nothing more than a cold, set-based obedience, that He was merely following an order. But not so fast, because it was not that way at all.

He had just said earlier in John 10:18 that "no *one* [it should be translated] takes my life from Me." That includes the Father. "No one takes my life from Me." Neither man, nor God.

The same word translated "power" (*exousia*) is also translated "power" in John 1:12. Right in that place my Bible has a marginal reference, and in the margin they suggest that you change that word "power" to "right." "The right." So the Greek word *exousia* can also mean "right." But it is more subtle and more expressive than that, because it can also properly be translated as "privileged," "authority," and "freedom." That last one is kind of interesting. Jesus is saying then that He has the *freedom* to lay down His life, or that He has the *right* to do it. Either one of those shows that He had a choice of whether He would do it, or whether He would not do it, even though the Father had given Him a charge.

Now do you think that is strange? Really, it is not. Do you know that God has done the same thing with you and me? Has He not called us, given us commandment, given us charges, and said, "You do this." Does that take away your free moral agency? No, it does not. We are going to turn to a scripture that you know very well that makes this just as plain as anything.

**Deuteronomy 30:18-19** I denounce unto you this day that you shall surely perish, and that you shall not prolong your days upon the land whither you pass over Jordan to go to possess it. I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing:

Do you see the charge? Do you see the commandment? Do you see the order? This is being set before ordinary people. And then He gives us the *real* charge:

**Deuteronomy 30:19** . . . therefore choose life, that both you and your seed may live.

You see, we still have the choice. This is why Jesus could say, even though He always

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did things to please the Father, that "Nobody makes me lay down My life. I am giving it voluntarily."

By making that declaration, He is saying, not only in the declaration itself, but also in what He actually did, He was showing and saying He was in perfect agreement with what God commanded. He was not saying "Oh, I'll do it because I have to." He was not saying, "I am doing it because You told Me I've got to do it, or else." You see, He did it freely. He laid down His life for the sheep. He laid down His life for the Kingdom of God. In laying down His life for the sheep and for the Kingdom of God He did as a free man.

Like the Spartans, like the Thermopylae, *because* they were free, Jesus went to His death because *He* was free, and because He wanted to *remain* free, and because He wanted to make everybody else free. You can begin to see that His understanding of laying down His life—His patriotism, as it were, for the Kingdom of God—was based upon its ideals. He was thoroughly imbued with them, and He wanted to ensure that others had the same opportunity that He did, and seeing it the same way that He did.

So Jesus laid down His life in complete agreement with the Father because of His love for the Father, and His love for mankind. By this act, He became the means of reconciliation for all concerned. What we are looking at here is the ultimate in patriotic sacrificial service. Shall we say *courage*? Certainly. He did what He did fully understanding. Deliberately He did it with forethought. So the Kingdom of God and its citizen is the nation that He felt kinship to, and to which He gave His life. Jesus understood more than any man before or since the ideals, the standards, and the purposes of the Kingdom of God. He believed and understood its place in the affairs of mankind in the past, in the present, and in the future, and this mix issued forth in deliberate, voluntary acts of selfless devotion. But this was not won, as we will see in a little bit.

**John 8:30-32** As he spake these words, many believed on him. Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If you continue in my word, then are you my disciples indeed; And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

Remember this, because I said that in order for a person to make the kind of decision that Jesus did in laying down His life, the person has to be free to voluntarily do it.

**John 8:33** They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how say you, You shall be made free?

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We are breaking into an encounter here that is a continuous, uninterrupted story that begins with people seemingly believing Jesus' teaching. The question in the story from Jesus' point of view is this: Were these people, who seemingly believed, truly convicted? That is, was there a real change of heart, or was their believing merely a mental assent, a momentary intellectual agreement with what He had said to that point? In order to discover which it was, He then made the statement that if they would *continue* in His word they would know the truth, and the truth would set them free.

Those who said that they believed immediately challenged His assertion, claiming they were never in bondage to anybody. Jesus meant that they were in bondage to Satan and sin, and it is from this that they needed to be set free. By the time that one reaches the end of the chapter, they were ready to kill the One they claimed to believe in.

Now here is the lesson for us. Believing and understanding truth that sets one free, to give one's life as Jesus did, is not something that happens in a mere moment of time. Yes indeed, there are fulfilling moments containing flashes in which we grasp pertinent understanding as the Jews did in John 8, but the freedom of which Jesus speaks is built upon believing and living many, many such moments.

Turn to John 17:17, and we will confirm what I just said.

**John 7:17** If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.

"Know" here is used in the sense of understanding. *Doing* takes time. A person can believe something in a moment, but to carry it out in practical aspect in one's life requires time. So if anyone will *do*, he will know, grasp, and understand. If you put the two of them together, then you understand that doing takes time, but produces both clarity and understanding so that one can truly be free right from the inside out.

True patriotism requires a depth of clear understanding, combined with a sense of kinship that will issue forth in many, many continuous daily acts of patriotism. In order to truly do this, one must be what Jesus termed as "free"—free to voluntarily give one's self in life as He did. This does not happen instantaneously. It is something we have to grow into.

We grow by degrees since we have already been in prison by human nature. It will not be accomplished until we are no longer subject to sin. We are going to be fighting this

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battle all the way to the resurrection. We are going to be in this war. This is why I am talking about patriotism. Our war may not be bloody, but our war can last 30, 40, 50, who knows how many years, and human nature will still be there.

We know the testimony of the Apostle Paul given in Romans 7. He had been an apostle for twenty years, but even as an apostle he was fighting that battle with human nature that was actually trying to recapture and put him into prison where he would not be free to give himself to the brethren, to give himself to Christ, to give himself to the Father in whatever they demanded of him in his responsibility.

Romans 7:24-25 tells us what Paul said.

**Romans 7:24-25** O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.

It is a constant struggle. If we put what Paul said here in Romans 7:24-25 in modern language, as he concludes the struggle he had with human nature, what he was saying is, "I am just going to have to deal with it. It is going to be there. I know I am going to be delivered, but I am going to have to deal with it." Paul understood, and understood very clearly and strongly, that God ordered things in that way. Even though he was not completely free of it, he was burdened with it for his good.

We are going to continue with this, because now it begins to come home. We are going to go to John 15:11. Remember the setting. The next day Jesus would be crucified, and these are final instructions to His closest followers—things He wanted to put into their mind so that they would be able to use it and to remember it. As time went on, and He would be in heaven and nowhere close, as it might seem, where they could just call on Him in person, He said:

**John 15:11-14** These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full. This is my commandment, That you love one another **as I have loved you**. Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do whatsoever I command you.

Jesus here is giving us a charge—a very high goal to strive to reach despite being encumbered with a nature that we will never be completely free of until the resurrection

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of the dead. The command He has set here requires a lifetime of acts of patriotism in behalf of the Kingdom of God and its citizens.

Laying down one's life in a singular act that results in death is certainly included within what Jesus just said; however, I am sure that it is not the main thrust of His thought. It is not the main thought, because His love is absolutely unique. Remember, He said, "As I have loved you." That sets the bar up really high. But even though He set it up there, it is something that we cannot completely imitate. We cannot follow it perfectly because His love and His acts of sacrifice of patriotism are absolutely unique.

No one else's love has the value, the substitutionary character and the redemptive power as His. In other words, we cannot be as totally consistent as He was, and we cannot have our death substitute for another person by laying down our life. That person cannot be redeemed and set free from Satan and sin.

The main thrust of His appeal here is that our life and love should reflect the same self-sacrificing pattern as His. This kind of instruction emphasizing a pattern of laying down one's life is shown in other places. I want you to go to John 13:14-17. I will give a quick example

**John 13:13-17** You call me Master and Lord: and you say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If you know these things, happy [or blessed] are you if you do them.

Now go back to verse 1, and we will tie verse 1 with what He said there.

**John 13:1** Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.

There are two things in these verses that we have just read within the context of this chapter. The first one is obvious. Those were in verses 14 through 17. He was saying we should follow His pattern of keeping the Passover. The second thought is gathered beginning in verse 1. It should be translated "He loved them to the uttermost." This is the way it should be rendered. It does not mean to the end of His life. It has the meaning

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of saying that His love had no limit to it. John means that Jesus' love for the apostles was expressed in countless, small acts of daily services and kindnesses, and all the way to the death. His patriotism, His self-sacrificing sense of kinship for His brothers had no limit, from the smallest thoughtfulnesses to literally giving His life for *any* of them.

There is the pattern in Jesus' life. Remember, this is for *our* instruction. We have to have a goal to shoot towards.

We are going to go to Luke 9:23. This was said earlier than what is said there in John 13:14.

**Luke 9:23** And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross **daily**, and follow me.

That word "daily" was put in there purposely by God, through Luke, to let us know that we are not talking about a one-time laying down one's life for a brother. It is talking about doing it daily. This is not something that we are supposed to take vacations from if we are going to follow the pattern of Jesus Christ. So here is a three-step plan that you can get from what Jesus said in this context.

- 1) We must say no to self-centeredness. It must be sacrificed within the self first before there will be outward performance. Understanding helps a very great deal here. It is truth that sets free, and living it continually produces clarity and understanding. We must say no to self-centeredness.
- 2) Bearing a cross was forced on a condemned man in those days to further the means of shame, to intensify the sense of shame. However, we must voluntarily and willingly bear whatever pain, shame, or persecution that is the fruit of this peculiar lifestyle that Christ has given us.
- 3) We must continue trusting Him as we loyally walk in His footsteps, obeying His command out of gratitude for salvation in and through Him.

These three steps are how we lay down our life. This is how we perform acts of patriotism in behalf of the Kingdom of God. We follow Christ's example, becoming free, and remaining free to *choose* to do it. Our choices are to be as deliberate as we can possibly do it. There is a similarity here to the hundreds, perhaps thousands, of small sacrifices ordinary citizens on the home front bore without complaint in the course of

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World War II in behalf of the nation's cause.

We are going to add one more thing to this in order to tie this together. We are going to go back to John 15, verses 14 through 16 and verse 19.

**John 15:14-16** You are my friends if you do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knows not what his lord does: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you. You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that you should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever you shall ask of the Father in my name he may give you.

**John 15:19** If you were of the world, the world would love his own: [Hang onto that. The world loves its own.] but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you *out* of the world, therefore the world hates you.

How does this apply to us? He had just said that we are to lay down our life for our friend. Who then is our friend? Well, verse 19 makes that very clear. The world hates us. Our friends are not in the world. We are left with one organization on earth. Our friends are in the church. They are part of the brotherhood. They too were called by Jesus, and so our sacrificial acts of serving are to be done in ***their*** behalf. That does not mean that it is exclusively, that we cannot do anything for the world. Of course we can, but the church—our friends in the church—had better have first priority.

Let me give you a simple illustration of why this is true. In the Second World War, it was considered an act of treason, of betrayal, if any American, regardless of his position in the government or amongst the people, did anything to help the enemy. Is that clear? James 4 makes it very clear that if one makes himself a friend of the world he makes himself an enemy of God. God has us boxed in.

From God's point of view, our laying down of life has to be for the Father, for the Son, and for our brethren. Is that clear? It is in that order of priority. God wants us to fear *Him*, and fear's practical effect is to highly respect Him and all that He is so that we are motivated to dread not obeying Him. Do you know that doing this actually sets us free? That is something that human nature has a hard time getting its mind around. To make one's self the slave of Jesus Christ and to lay our life down for Him actually sets us free.

There is no doubt that there are many specific reasons that could be given for why we



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find sacrifice so hard to do, but there is no doubt that one of the major reasons is fear—the fear of sacrifice—because we know it is going to cost us something.

Paul says the following in II Timothy 2:3.

**II Timothy 2:3-4** You therefore endure hardness [or suffering] as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that wars entangles himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who has chosen him to be a soldier.

Hardship indicates suffering. There is one Bible translation that translates verse 3 as this: "As a noble soldier of Jesus Christ, suffer hardship along with us." So Paul especially cautions us not to get tangled up with the world, but for the purpose of this sermon it is the concept of suffering that interests me in regard to this.

One of my favorite books of all time, in the last 20 or 30 years anyway, was General Douglas MacArthur's *Reminiscences*. On page 424 of his autobiography he said the following:

The soldier, above all men, is required to practice the greatest act of religious training [sacrifice]. In battle, 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 divine help that alone can sustain him. However horrible the instances 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.

He also said in another place in the same book, "A soldier is called sometimes to fight, sometimes to die, but always to suffer." We are in a war. It cannot be avoided without costing us salvation.

Page 2 of the introduction to *The United States Fighting Man's Manual* (a booklet given to all servicemen) adds this thought:

An indomitable will to resist is not acquired overnight [where did we get to hear this from Jesus? You have to continue in the word.], nor can it be supplied by military training alone, for it rests on character traits instilled in our home, our schools, and our churches—traits such as self-confidence, self-discipline, self-respect, moral responsibility, and faith in God and

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country.

When God called us—we, the weak of the world—our nature is not prepared to deny itself and to sacrifice itself in the behalf of another. This world that we were born into has trained us well to be usually self-concerned, self-centered, distrustful of others in a "dog-eat-dog"—"every-man-for-himself" society. In other words, we are free to give of ourselves in patriotic sacrifices in behalf of the Kingdom of God only to a very tiny degree when called. Now Jesus promised that the truth sets free.

**John 8:32-36** And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how say you, You shall be made free? Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever commits sin is the servant of sin. And the servant abides not in the house forever: but the Son abides ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, you shall be free indeed.

Let us understand what He said here. Truth sets free from the shackles of self-centered human nature. However, truth does not come instantaneously, but rather gradually. Becoming free to live life as God intends is a function of the relationship with Jesus Christ. We cannot break the bondage to sin on our own. **The Son must set us free.**

When we accept His blood, we are freed, but only to a limited degree. The relationship *must continue* in order to allow the expanse of the freedom to get greater and broader and more meaningful. That is why it has to continue until we are to the place where we can lay down our life the way He did. But all the while we are doing this, we have to lay our lives down a little bit at a time as we are able to have the freedom, the liberty, the understanding to do it, because it is in doing it you shall know the truth, and it is in the doing that we come to fully understand.

What He said here is important for us to understand, because the entire context is written in a conditional sense, but that sense does not translate easily into English. In practical application, the conditional sense means that Christ does the action of setting us free, but the responsibility of choosing to *remain* free is ours. It is a cooperative effort. That is something we cannot dodge in the way of responsibility, and it is the first step in laying our life down in behalf of the Father and the Son. It is simply choosing to do the right thing.

Turn to II Corinthians 3:17. You should understand this immediately.

**II Corinthians 3:17** Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

Paul is telling us that we are already empowered to remain free. It is up to us. We are free to choose to lay down our life in behalf of the Kingdom of God in patriotic sacrifice if we believe that the kinship is worth it. You see, we put the value on it.

**James 3:13-18** Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? Let him show out of a good conduct his works with meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descends not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.

James tells us that it takes a certain kind of environment to produce what God wants developed within us.

What I am about to say may seem like a contradiction, but it is not. What God wants is not developed in an environment of war. People of patriotism are not developed within the crisis. It is in times of peace that they are prepared so that when the crisis arrives, the crisis then proves their preparation. "The fruits of righteousness are sown in peace by those who make peace."

You see, I am on this subject right now because we are in a time of relative peace, and now is the time for preparation for when the crisis really arises.

**Hebrews 10:37-39** For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.

The pretty vivid word-picture from which Paul drew this is of cowardly men throwing

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away their shields and running away in battle. But we are not in the crisis at the close yet, and so right now our battle is internal. It involves the overcoming of our nature. But just the same, we must not flee from this preparation battle that is taking place in times of peace.

Think about this. Materially, we have very little to lose by comparison to the signers of the Declaration of Independence, but God does demand of us a commitment of time and energy and submission. Think of this too. Spiritually, we are at our best state altogether vanity, so what do we have to lose?

As I said this morning, it is a matter of fact that if we choose to continue to remain free, we cannot lose. We are on the winning side.

We are going to finish reading a fairly long reading from Hebrews 12.

**Hebrews 12:12-14** Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way: but let it rather be healed. Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.

The issue, brethren, is holiness. The issue is going on to perfection. The issue is growing in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. The issue is growing in service to God and the brotherhood. The issue is being prepared for the Kingdom of God. All of those aspects require laying down our life for the Kingdom of God. And so he goes on to say:

**Hebrews 12:15-29** Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God, lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled: Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. For you know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance though he sought it carefully with tears. For you are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more: (For they could not endure that which was commanded, and if so much as a beast touch the mountain it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart: And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake:) But you are come unto mount

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Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect. And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel. See that you refuse not him that speaks. For if they escaped not who refused him that spoke on earth, much more shall not we escape if we turn away from him that speaks from heaven: Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he has promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word, Yet once more, signifies the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: For our God is a consuming fire.

Satan is trying his hardest to wage war against these preparations continuing because he knows that he has but a short time before he is unseated from his position of power. So brethren, take the pledge of allegiance to commit yourself to lay down your life in patriotic acts, choosing to allow God to work in you, for *our sacred honor* to the cause of Almighty God is what is at stake.

That is the end of the sermon for today. I hope the remainder of the day for all of you is one that is a blessing.