

## Too High of a Call?

**Philippians 3:14-** “I press toward *the* goal for the prize of the *high calling of God in Christ Jesus.*”

This past Tuesday, we celebrated our Nation’s Independence Day. 12 of the original 13 colonies voted to approve the Declaration of Independence on July, 4<sup>th</sup>, 1776 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania at the Second Continental Congress. The 56 delegates signed the document mostly on August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1776. They voted to approve it on July 4<sup>th</sup>. The men who signed did so in defiance of King George of England and now they would be putting a price on their heads and risking their very lives and perhaps *sacrificing* everything they owned for the price of freedom from tyranny. They knew that England would be unleashing hell on the colonies and the road ahead would not be an easy one. The Revolutionary War would last 8 years until 1783. The British signed the Treaty of Paris on September 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1783 and formally recognized the independence of the United States.

Throughout our history, we have had a steady occurrence of conflicts. Not to get into a history lesson, but only eight wars were fought on U.S. soil. The American Revolution, The War of 1812, The Civil War, and World War II (Pearl Harbor) are

just to name the most familiar four. These battles were truly for our freedoms here at home and our Republic.

Rather than list all of the conflicts the United States has been in, it is far easier to post the time the U.S. has been involved at war. Since 1776, more than 92% of the time of our existence, the United States has been involved in foreign conflicts over 225 years. Now I am as Patriotic as they come, but were all of these conflicts fought *for our* freedom? Perhaps not, as some would argue, but most certainly they were to halt evil and aggression *somewhere* in the world. So many young people answered the call when needed without hesitation and made the ultimate *sacrifice*. So many never came home. So costly a price.

As Robbie said the blessing on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July for our lunch, he mentioned the sacrifice of those who gave their lives for our freedom. I thought about all of those young people who died in service to this nation in whatever war it may have been. They heard a call and they answered. What motivated them then and what motivates them now? Yes, there are still many out there that have spines and hearts.

And what of us? What was it *you* heard when God called you to His way of life (John 6:44)? Was it a trumpet blasting in your ear? Probably not. Or was it a still small voice like Elijah?

**1 Kings 19:12-** “And after the earthquake was a fire, *but* the LORD *was* not in the fire. And after the fire *was* a still, small voice.”

Something sparked inside as you are here. How many people receive the invitation as we did and mark it return to sender? We will see them at the Second Resurrection. The ones who sent it back may have longer faces than those who never got one.

**Matthew 13:18-23-** “Therefore, hear the parable of the Sower: When anyone hears the Word of the kingdom and does not understand *it*, the wicked one comes and snatches away that which was sown in his heart. This is the one who was sown by the way. Now the one who was sown upon the rocky places is the one who hears the Word and immediately receives it with joy; But *because* he has no root in himself, *he* does not endure; for when tribulation or persecution arises because of the Word, he is quickly offended. And the one who was sown among the thorns is the one who hears the Word, but the cares of this life and the deceitfulness of riches choke the Word, and it becomes unfruitful. But the one who was sown on good ground, this is the one who hears the Word and understands, who indeed

brings forth fruit and produces—one a hundredfold, another sixtyfold *and* another thirtyfold.”

Thank God He had our soil tilled up just right. Our spiritual growth is now up to us to keep it cultivated with His word.

For so many, the cost of the invitation is too high. The “sacrifice” is too great for someone to actually accept God’s invitation to His way of life. According to the Free On-Line Dictionary, the definition of sacrifice is:

1. The act of offering something to a deity in propitiation or homage, especially the ritual slaughter of an animal or person.
2. The act of giving up something highly valued for the sake of something else considered to have a *greater* value or claim.

There were a couple of others mentioned but these two were the most applicable.

Sacrificing does not seem to exist in anyone’s vocabulary these days. How many times have you seen the bumper sticker that reads, “He who dies with the most toys wins.” Giving something up hits the nail on the head. “Oh, there’s no way I’d ever give up my traditions!” Andrea and I have heard that one right out of a friend’s mouth. Well, have a nice 1000-year nap. It is their choice and it is not their time to be called.

That is what I find so tragic. What did we really give up in coming to God's truth? Christmas? Easter? Halloween? Lies? Lies? And more Lies? Holiday chaos, Black Friday shopping? Trying to please ungrateful relatives? Candy, bunnies, chicks, baskets, phonies in Sunday churches with new clothes for a once-a-year visit? Handing out candy to kids dressed like demons? Okay, so we gave up eating pork, shrimp, lobster, and other bottom feeding vermin that health wise do us no good. It used to drive me nuts putting up Christmas lights every year, contributing to the shareholders of FPL and then getting to take them all down again...such fun. But do we honestly miss any of it?

I do not. In all seriousness, God has replaced all these things in such a way, that His way has made the ways of the world become strangely dim and faded. They continue to disappear in the rearview mirror as we grow in His ways and in the likeness of His Son.

I know for me, the Sabbath has certainly become that *one* day of the week I surely look forward too. It is a far cry from when I first started going to Bible Study on Saturday's. I would always drive separate from Andrea so I could purposely be late. Now, I may still be late on occasion but it is usually because I am up all night or delayed because of Rusty and Bear.

**Isaiah 58:13-14** “If you turn your foot away from the Sabbath, *from* doing your own desires on My holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the LORD, honorable; and shall honor Him, not doing your own ways, nor pursuing *your own* desires, nor speaking *your own* words, Then you shall delight yourself in the LORD; and I will cause you to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed you with the inheritance of Jacob your father, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken it.”

But as we grow in wisdom and knowledge of God’s word and in our relationship with Him, we learn that God desires mercy and not sacrifice.

**Hosea 6:6-** “For I desire mercy and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.”

**Matthew 9:13-** “Now go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice.’ For I did not come to call *the* righteous, but sinners to repentance.”

Mercy triumphs over judgment. The more we grow in the image of Christ Jesus the more we come to realize this.

**James 2:13-** “For the one who has dealt without mercy *will be* judged without mercy. But mercy triumphs over judgment.” He does not want us sitting in judgment of the lost around us as difficult as that sometimes may be for us.

In addition, none of us have sacrificed anything to the point where we have suffered and lost blood...at least not yet.

**Hebrews 12:2-4-** “Having *our minds* fixed on Jesus, the Beginner and Finisher of *our* faith; Who for the joy that lay ahead of Him endured *the* cross, *although* He despised *the* shame, and has sat down at *the* right hand of the throne of God. Now meditate deeply on Him Who endured such great hostility of sinners against Himself so that you do not become weary and faint in your minds. You have not yet resisted to the point of *losing* blood in your struggle against sin.”

Just as a thought, we all know Jesus laid down His life for all mankind to be the Perfect Sacrifice for our sins. But did you ever stop to think what He gave up before He got to be beaten, scourged, whipped, spit upon, mocked, and crucified?

**John 1:1-5-** “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and not even one thing that was created came into being without

Him. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, but the darkness does not comprehend it.”

Yes, He gave all that up for you and me. God the Father sent Him to do just what He did. **John 3:16** says it all.

Freedom from tyranny and evil has always had a high price. In terms of lives, our nation has lost over 1.1 million lives (according to PBS on-line) in all the wars we have been involved in since 1776. Where did our freedom really begin? It was not at Valley Forge, nor Bunker Hill. It was not the in the Argonne Forest, Normandy, Saipan, Tokyo, Chosin Reservoir, Khe Sanh, Iraq, nor Afghanistan. The greatest decision for freedom ever made was in a place called Gethsemane and uttered with the words, “Your will be done.” (**Matthew 26:42**). The *eternal* victory followed three days later with an empty tomb and a risen Savior and the human race liberated from sin and death. The price paid was more costly than all of the wars on Earth combined, the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ laid down His life that our sins may be forgiven and that we may have eternal life. No greater price has ever been laid on the alter of freedom.

As we read in the essay, there was a quote from Theodore Roosevelt. It is apparent it was paraphrased in the essay as parts were omitted. The quote is actually from his speech at the Sorbonne in Paris, France on April 23, 1910:

“It is not the critic who counts: not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles or where the doer of deeds could have done better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually **in the arena**, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood, who strives valiantly, who errs and comes up short again and again, because there is no effort without error or shortcoming, but who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions, who spends himself in a worthy cause; who, at the best, knows, in the end, the triumph of high achievement, and who, at the worst, if he fails, at least he fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who knew neither victory nor defeat.”

—Theodore Roosevelt

Roosevelt’s words parallel our Christian walk to certain extents. We know the great enthusiasm and devotions associated with our calling, we spend ourselves in a worthy cause that we know in the end, even when we fail from time to time, our place is not with the defeated.

We have heard the voice of the Lord and we have answered Him.

**Isaiah 6:8-** “And I heard the voice of the LORD, saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” Then I said, “Here *am* I; send me!” Amen.

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