

Freedom Isn't Free – June 30th

I don't know about you, but I get emotional whenever I hear the National Anthem and see our flag. I realize how blessed we are to live in this great nation with such freedom. We are gathered here without fear of reprisal, as we are free to worship as we see fit.

We will celebrate our nation's birthday with Independence Day in just a few days. The Fourth of July has come to mean many things to us Americans. It means baseball, hotdogs, and Chevrolet to some. It is a day off to lay around the pool or beach with others. The Fourth is a time for us to relax, spend time with our families, and eat and watch parades and fireworks. Sometimes we forget the real meaning of the holiday, to celebrate that our Founding Fathers risked their lives so we could be free.

There have been many countless sacrifices to maintain our freedom through the years. From Valley Forge to Gettysburg, to San Juan Hill, to WWI, to the beaches of Normandy and Okinawa, to Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan, brave men and women serve so that we can eat hotdogs and ice cream in peace and freedom. As we look at the rows of white tombstones in our cemeteries, we are reminded that freedom isn't free. It was bought with the blood of patriots and kept by the sacrifice of countless men and women who serve around the globe.

We have an even greater freedom today than the freedom our nation grants us. We are free in Christ. His sacrifice purchased a pardon from sin and set us free to live a new and meaningful life. Our flag symbolizes our freedom as a nation, so the cross symbolizes that we are free in Christ. The great hymn-writer Isaac Watts wrote in *When I Survey the Wondrous Cross*, "When I survey the wondrous cross On which the Prince of glory died, My richest gain I count but loss, And pour contempt on all my pride. Were the whole realm of nature mine, That were a present far too small: Love so amazing, so divine, Demands my soul, my life, my all."

We can never give a gift to repay God for the sacrifice of His Son. The point of the hymn is not that we should try to repay God with our gifts. The point is that a sacrifice like that so freely given causes us to WANT to give back to Him freely, willingly, and out of love.

Let's keep this in mind as we approach our giving this week.