

I Am Also a Citizen of the United States

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake)

Introduction:

The Story Behind The National Anthem

By an unknown speaker (Jan Mickelson of WHO Radio taped the speech in 1990)

(Edited for length and grammar - prb)

Francis Scott Key was a lawyer in Baltimore. The new nation was engaged in a vicious conflict with the mother country, Britain. Because of this conflict (and the protracted nature of it), they had accumulated prisoners on both sides. Both the Americans and the British had prisoners. The American government initiated a move. They went to the British and asked to negotiate for the release of these prisoners. They said, "We want to send a man out to discuss this with you." They were holding the American prisoners in ships about a thousand yards offshore. And they said, "We want to send a man by the name of Francis Scott Key. He will come out and negotiate to see if we can make a mutual exchange."

On the appointed day in a rowboat, he went out to the ship and negotiated with the British officials. They reached the conclusion that the men could be exchanged on a one-to-one basis.

Francis Scott Key, jubilant with the fact that he'd been successful, went down below in the ship and what he'd found was a cargo hold full of men. He said, "Men, I've got news for you tonight; you're free!" He said, "Tonight I have negotiated successfully your return home." He said, "You'll be taken out of this boat, out of this filth, out of your chains."

As he went back top side to arrange for their passage to the shore, the admiral came and said, "We have a problem." He said, "We will still honor our commitment to release these men, but it'll be merely academic after tonight. It won't matter."

Key said, "What do you mean?"

He said, "Well Mr. Key, tonight, we have laid an ultimatum on this fort. Your people will either capitulate and lay down the colors of that flag, or -- you see that fort over there -- Fort McHenry?" He said, "We're going to remove it from the face of the earth."

Key said, "How are you going to do that?"

The admiral said, "If you will, scan the horizon." As he looked, he could see a multitude of little dots. The admiral said, "That's the British war fleet. All of the gun power; all of our armament is being called upon to demolish that fort. The fleet will be within striking distance in a matter of two and a half hours. The war is over; these men would be free anyway."

Key said, "You can't shell that fort! It's full of women and children. It's predominantly not a military fort."

The Admiral said, "Don't worry about it. We've left them a 'way out.' Do you see that flag up there on the rampart? We have told them that if they will lower that flag, the shelling will stop immediately... and we'll know that they've surrendered... and you will be under British rule."

Francis Scott Key went below and told the men what was about to happen. And they asked, "How many ships?"

He answered, "Dozens." The ships came closer. Key went back topside and said, "Men, I'll shout down to you what's going on as I keep watch." As twilight began to fall and the haze hung over the bay as it does at sunset, suddenly the British war fleet unleashed.

Key reported, "The sounds were deafening. There were so many guns; there was no relief. It was nearly impossible to talk or hear. Suddenly, the dark sky was brightly lit." From down below, the prisoners shouted, "Tell us where the flag is. What have they done with the flag? Is the flag still over the rampart? Tell us!"

One hour. Two hours. Three hours into the shelling. Every time a bomb would explode close to the flag, they could see the flag illuminated in the red glare of the explosion, and Francis Scott Key would report down to the men below, "It's still up! It's not down!" The admiral came, and he said, "Your people are mad. Don't they understand this is an impossible situation?"

Key remembered what George Washington had said. "The thing that sets the American Christian apart from all other people in the world is he will die on his feet before he'll live on his knees."

The Admiral said, "We have now instructed all of the gunners to focus on the rampart to take that flag down." He said further, "We don't understand this. Our reconnaissance tells us that that flag has been hit directly again and again, yet it's still flying. We don't understand that. But now we're about to bring every gun for the next three hours to bear on that point."

Key said the barrage was unmerciful. All that he could hear between the bursts of the bombardment was the men below praying: "God keep that flag flying where we last saw it."

Sunrise came. Key said there was a heavy mist hanging over the land, but the rampart was high enough that they could see it above the mist. There stood the flag, completely nondescript and in shreds. The flagpole itself was at a tilted angle, but the flag was still at the top. Francis Scott Key went aboard a rowboat and immediately went to Fort McHenry to see what had happened. And what he'd found was that the flagpole and the flag had suffered repetitious direct hits. Apparently when it had fallen, the men, fathers and husbands, who knew what it meant for that flag to be on the ground, knowing that all of the British guns were trained on it, walked over and held it up, humanly, until they died. Their bodies were then removed and others took their place. Francis Scott Key said what held that flagpole in place at that unusual angle were patriots' bodies.

He penned the poem in its entirety. The price for the nation was paid.

The Star Spangled Banner

By Francis Scott Key

O say can you see, by the dawn's early light,
What so proudly we hail'd at the twilight's last gleaming,
Whose broad stripes and bright stars through the perilous fight
O'er the ramparts we watch'd were so gallantly streaming?

And the rocket's red glare, the bomb bursting in air,
Gave proof through the night that our flag was still there,
O say does that star-spangled banner yet wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave?

On the shore dimly seen through the mists of the deep
Where the foe's haughty host in dread silence reposes,
What is that which the breeze, o'er the towering steep,
As it fitfully blows, half conceals, half discloses?
Now it catches the gleam of the morning's first beam,
In full glory reflected now shines in the stream,
'Tis the Star - Spangled Banner - O long may it wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave!

And where is that band who so vauntingly swore,
That the havoc of war and the battle's confusion
A home and a Country should leave us no more?
Their blood has wash'd out their foul footsteps' pollution.
No refuge could save the hireling and slave
From the terror of flight or the gloom of the grave,
And the Star - Spangled Banner in triumph doth wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave.

O thus be it ever when freemen shall stand
Between their lov'd home and the war's desolation!
Blest with vict'ry and peace may the heav'n rescued land
Praise the power that hath made and preserv'd us a nation!
Then conquer we must, when our cause it is just,
And this be our motto - "In God is our trust,"
And the Star - Spangled Banner in triumph shall wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave.

I. HOLDING UP THE FLAG

A. The purpose of this lesson

1. I will not engage in a discussion of the morality of war. I have heard arguments on both sides and can answer both. It is a pointless discussion
2. I will not engage in a discussion of Christians engaged in warfare. It is unprofitable and harmful to publically discuss a weak brother's scruple of conscience.
3. I will not engage in a discussion of politics. That has no place in the assemblies of God's people
4. I will not engage in conversations with you public or private on any conspiracy theory currently in fashion among some Christians
5. I will talk about our role as Christians who are citizens of the United States of America

- B. Many professed Christians tend to be little different than non-Christians in attitudes toward authority. Compliance is given, but cooperation is not. One would be just as likely to find a radar detector in the car of a Christian, as in the car of an unbeliever. Christians comply with the law, but they are not willingly cooperative.
 - 1. In Romans 13:1-7, Paul deals directly with the Christian's attitude and conduct toward civil authority
 - 2. There are occasions when Christians and civil government might be at odds with one another, but some Christians will twist these into excuses for disrespect and disobedience to authorities.
- C. When Christians and government clash:
 - 1. Civil government is secular in nature and Christianity is spiritual.
 - a. John 18:36; 1Peter 1:17; Phil. 3:20
 - 2. Civil government often looks on Christianity as competitive or hostile to its authority - Acts 5:29
 - a. In response, Christians are often tempted to see government as an enemy of God and the gospel.
 - 3. U.S. civil government is currently in a cycle of opposition to Christianity, especially the current Presidential administration, and the press is openly antagonistic to Christianity; Christians and their values are becoming an unpopular minority view.
 - a. This does not justify backbiting this country, regretting our citizenship, or breaking the law privately or publically

I. ROMANS 13:1-7

- A. Rom. 13:1a - "Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities."
 - 1. The commandment is addressed to all mankind, without exception, both believers and unbelievers.
 - 2. These governmental authorities are assumed to be legitimate; under normal conditions, it is the government in place
 - 3. There were times when men had to choose to obey God, rather than men; but when one cannot obey, he can still demonstrate a submissive spirit.
 - a. 1Sam. 25 - Abigail, Nabal, and David
 - b. Daniel and his companions only refused to obey on clear conflicts with God's law
- B. Reason 1: Civil government is Divinely ordained
 - 1. Rom. 13:1b - "For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God."
 - 2. God is sovereign. All human authority is delegated to men by God.
 - 3. How do we know that a given government is ordained of God and that He has given it authority? A government's existence is proof that it is ordained of God
 - 4. God raised up Pharaoh (Rom. 9:17), as well as Assyria and Babylon (Hab. 1 & 2).
 - 5. Submission to government is an expression of our submission to God.

6. God instituted human government to exercise Divinely delegated authority over men.

C. Reason 2: Consequences - Rom. 13:2-4

1. Ordinarily, one who is seeking to do good need not fear government. Christians should be the best citizens, for their calling is consistent with government's Divine commission.
2. But we should fear government when we choose to do evil. Only the law-breaker looks over his shoulder, wondering where the police are.
3. It should also be said that government's God-given role also frees the Christian from retaliating against those who persecute or mistreat him

D. Reason 3: A clear conscience - Rom. 13:5-7

1. Subjection which is based only on the fear of consequences is incomplete as sexual purity based solely on the fear of contracting AIDS
2. What does our conscience have to do with submission to human government? Mere outward compliance with the requirements of government is simply not enough. This we can expect from unbelievers, if for no other reason than the fear of punishment. But God desires a fuller, deeper, obedience from the heart. This requires conscientious subjection—submitting done out of obedience to God. Such an attitude of submission enables us to retain the right attitude and actions toward government even when we must disobey specific laws in order to obey God.
3. We could easily murmur, despise, and cheat our government and get away with it for a lifetime; but will God hold the same view of your behavior that you do?

Conclusion:

- A. You are not just a Christian; you are a citizen of the United States of America
 1. You will be judged, not only on how you conducted yourself as a Christian, but also as a citizen.
 2. That applies to preachers and any members who teach audiences to disobey civil government without Bible authority
 3. That applies to preachers and any members who treat Christians who are soldiers or police officers as if they were sinners
 4. This applies to preachers and any members who circulate on Facebook and in email disrespectful and dishonest messages about civil leaders
 5. This applies to members who backbite civil leaders in public or private, or cheat on their taxes, or who only obey the laws when the police are watching
- B. You are a Christian and a citizen of this country; if you are unwilling to respect your citizenship in this realm, you won't be welcome in the realm to come