

**“Stand for Freedom”
John 8:28-36
5-28-17**

Well it is Memorial Day weekend, and we want to honor those who have made the ultimate sacrifice and laid their lives on the altar of freedom. To all of our service men and women and their families, we also salute and thank you! I have a patriotic message I want to share with you this morning titled: Stand for Freedom. So open your Bibles and turn with me to John chapter 8. Stand with me in honor of God’s word and let’s read John 8:28-36:

28 So Jesus said to them, “When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me. 29 And he who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to him.” 30 As he was saying these things, many believed in him. 31 So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, 32 and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” 33 They answered him, “We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say, ‘You will become free?’” 34 Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave[a] to sin. 35 The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever. 36 So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.” Prayer.

In the movie Braveheart, William Wallace famously said: “[T]hey may take our lives, but they’ll never take... OUR FREEDOM!!!” and I believe Paul’s words are fitting when he said: “Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free” (Galatians 5:1). As we talk about Standing for Freedom, I want you to notice four things. First of all....

I. FREEDOM IS FUNDAMENTAL

Freedom is fundamental. It is a basic gift from God. In the beginning, God made us in his image and his likeness (Gen. 1:26). When God put man in the garden, he said: "You are *free* to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil..." (Gen. 2:16-17). Words engraved on Jefferson’s Memorial reflect that truth: “God who gave us life gave us liberty at the same time.”¹ God made us to be free. Free to obey him or to disobey him. Free to love him or not to love him.

However, this wonderful gift of freedom is not without consequences, as we know from what transpired in the Garden (Gen. 2-3). After the fall into sin, and the slavery to sin, God promised a Deliverer, a Savior, which we now know is Jesus Christ. Luke 4 tells us that he stood in the synagogue and proclaimed liberty to the captives. And true freedom only comes from a relationship with Him. He said: "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free," and “if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.” (John 8:31-32, 36).

Now obviously, this kind of freedom does not mean we have a license to do whatever we desire. It is not a freedom to do what we want, but a freedom to do what we ought. Freedom to do what is right. And that freedom is foundational to our Christian faith.

Freedom is also foundational to America. Remember, our Declaration of Independence eloquently states: “We hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness.”² God is not only the author of our freedom as individuals, but also for our nation.

Think about it. The God who ordained freedom for the individual is the same God who ordained the institution of government (Rom. 13:1). Now if God created us as free beings, and God created government, doesn't it make sense that he would want us to experience freedom in the context of a nation? That's what America's founding fathers believed. They drafted a social compact on the foundation of our God-given freedom, forming a government that seeks to protect and defend individual rights as granted by God. Obviously, the Founding Fathers were extremely successful.

Today America is still the nearest fulfillment of that God-given desire, that hope, that dream of freedom. Remember those Hebrew slaves down in Egypt? They dreamed of freedom. They prayed for freedom. They cried out for freedom. And God answered. He broke the chains of slavery, delivered them from their oppressors, and brought them into the Promised Land. Beginning with the Pilgrims on the Mayflower, many oppressed people have come to America and found it to be a Land of Promise, a place of freedom.

Another of our great national symbols is the Statue of Liberty. Emma Lazarus gave a voice to Lady Liberty, who stands with torch lifted and says to the world: "Give me your tired, your poor, Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free."³ A closer look reveals that there are chains under the Statue's feet, symbolizing Liberty crushing the chains of slavery. That picture captures something of the soul of America.

Think about it. No other nation enjoys such great freedoms. No other nation has been blessed like America has been blessed. On the front steps of the 21st century America continues to stand as the world's great superpower. We are the envy of the world. Multitudes want to immigrate to America, some even risking their lives seeking the freedom we enjoy and all of its fruit.

In the early 1830s, a Frenchman named Alexis de Tocqueville came to America and wrote a two-part book about what he observed entitled Democracy in America. In it, he states: “Upon my arrival in the United States the religious aspect of the country was the first thing that struck my attention... to which I was unaccustomed. In France I had almost always seen the spirit of religion and the spirit of freedom marching in opposite directions. But in America I found they were intimately united and that they reigned in common over the same country.”⁴ Tocqueville found that Faith and Freedom were united in America, and he recognized that it was the basis for our success as a nation. In fact, President John Adams declared that “The general principles upon which the Fathers achieved independence were... the general principles of Christianity.” Freedom founded on the Christian Faith is a part of the American DNA. Freedom is fundamental, but secondly...

II. FREEDOM IS NOT FREE

Freedom is costly. Freedom requires sacrifice. True freedom only comes at a great price. Freedom is not “free.” God took a huge risk to grant us freedom. When man chose to join Satan in his rebellion against God, the whole human race became enslaved

by sin. But God lovingly paid a great price to win us back. Our spiritual freedom cost God the life of His Son on an old rugged Roman cross, where he died in agony to pay for your sin, my sin, and the sins of the world. Our spiritual freedom came as a high price.

And that is not only true spiritually, but it is true nationally. The fight for freedom is never over. That's why we should honor the brave and intrepid souls who serve in our military and never let their sacrifices be in vain! We are the land of the free because of the brave, Amen?

Father Dennis Edward O'Brien, a Marine Corps Sergeant, gives us the right perspective: "It is the soldier, not the reporter who has given us the freedom of the press. It is the soldier, not the poet, who has given us the freedom of speech. It is the soldier, not the campus organizer, who gives us the freedom to demonstrate. It is the soldier who salutes the flag, who serves beneath the flag, and whose coffin is draped by the flag, who allows the protester to burn the flag."

Just survey our rich history and heritage of freedom. From the Minute Men who were out-manned and out-gunned by the British on Lexington Green and later when the tide was turned at Concord Bridge, to General Washington and his ill clad men enduring the harsh winter at Valley Forge, to the rocket's red glare over Fort McHenry in the War of 1812, to the blood soaked fields around Gettysburg where brother fought against brother, to the Doughboys in the trenches facing sniper fire and mustard gas in WWI, to the thousands of Sailors who died at Pearl Harbor, to the Soldiers who stormed the beaches of Normandy, to the Airmen who went on bombing raids over Tokyo, to the Marines who fought on the shores of Iwo Jima, on the frigid hills of Korea, the jungles of Vietnam, the deserts of Iraq, and the rugged mountains of Afghanistan—these Patriots secured our liberty at a high price.

Just view the rows of crosses in Arlington Cemetery and the cemeteries of American Servicemen, visit the graveyards throughout France and other countries, consider the forgotten bodies of our heroes who lie where they fell and those buried in the waters of the Seven Seas where they gave their all... not only for you and for me, but for the freedom of other nations and other peoples, and we should always remember—these brave souls bought and paid for our freedom. As the Lord Jesus put it: "Greater love has no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friend," or in this case, his country.

Because of God's blessing and because of the sacrifices of our military, no other nation enjoys such great freedoms as America. Freedom is not free, but then thirdly....

III. FREEDOM IS UNDER FIRE

Our freedom is under fire in America today. Our mission is to defend faith, family and freedom. But if you are a person of faith and you value family you may not be allowed to enjoy freedom. Our freedoms are under an all out assault in America. In fact, Paul encourages us to put on the full armor of God and take a stand in the evil day (Eph. 6:13). I would submit to you that the evil day is not coming to America, the evil day is here.

It is an evil day when a the Obamacare Mandate (still in place) can force California Churches to fund abortions in their healthcare plans. Pastor Jack Hibbs said he would go to jail before he could compromise. And it is an evil day when all taxpayers are still being forced to fund Planned Parenthood, whose main business is butchering babies

and supporting candidates who help them maintain their funding. Thomas Jefferson called such coercion an act of tyranny.

It is an evil day when sexual liberty now trumps religious liberty. It is having a terrible impact on Christian business owners, like photographers, bakers, and florists, who are harassed and fined by governments and courts for not bowing to sexual anarchists. It is tyranny!

It is an evil day when Christians who serve in public office like Dr. Eric Walsh, Fire Chief Kelvin Cochran, and County Clerk Kim Davis are fired and even jailed for their deeply held beliefs about marriage. It is tyranny!

It is an evil day when Christians in the military like Monifa Sterling are court-martialed for posting a Bible verse. MSGT Phillip Monk was relieved of duty by his superior, who did not like his answer on marriage. This person has now ID'd as transgender, and MSGT Monk was eventually exonerated and honored. It is still tyranny!

It is an evil day when Christian educators and parents of public school students are shut down for their beliefs on marriage. Crystal Dixon, former Associate Vice President of Human Resources at the University of Toledo, was terminated for writing an editorial challenging the notion that those choosing the homosexual lifestyle are “civil rights victims.” Dave Parker, parent of a 5 year old who brought home a diversity book bag with materials endorsing LGBT behavior and families, went to the school to demand that his son opt out of this madness. He was told by school officials that it was the law and he had no say in the matter. He refused to leave the office until he had satisfaction, and they eventually called the police and he was arrested, cuffed, and jailed – just because he insisted on maintaining his rights as a parent. It is tyranny!

What about the impact on Pastors and Churches? That is no more evident that what happened to Houston Five, whose sermons were subpoenaed by the openly lesbian Mayor who had forced through transgender bathrooms. Thankfully God's people rose up and defeated that measure. But there are many stories of churches that are harassed by zoning laws (parking, noise, etc). It is tyranny!

It is an evil day when religious liberty is being threatened and removed at alarming rate all across America.

- Coach Joe Kennedy fired for praying with student-athletes after the game.⁵
- Montgomery County, Virginia sheriff was ordered on May 17 to remove decals that bore the words, “Blessed are the peacemakers...Matthew 5:9.”⁶
- Bartlett Tennessee school district capitulated to the Freedom from Religion Foundation (bunch of militant atheists and agnostics) and abruptly shut down a grade school Bible club.
- A Pennsylvania school district capitulated to the demands of a militant atheist who filed a federal lawsuit demanding the district remove a 6 foot tall Ten Commandments monument erected on Valley High School campus. New Kensington-Arnold School District agreed to remove the massive monument within 30 days – ending a lawsuit filed in 2012 by self-avowed atheist Marie Schaub.⁷ was a religious symbol and therefore was a violating of the U.S. Constitution.

- In Augusta, Maine a school worker was ordered to stop using religious phrases like “I will pray for you” and “You were in my prayers” because such language is not allowed inside a public school building – even in private conversations with coworkers. They launched an investigation of Toni Richardson after they alleged she “imposed some strong religious/spiritual belief system” towards a coworker, who by the way attends the same church.⁸ Insanity!
- The Avila’s were threatened by California School officials and then a Sheriff’s deputy because their seven year old was handing out Bible verses packed in his school lunch by his mom at school and then on a public sidewalk. Is this still America?
- Something must be done to right this wrong, people said. A message had to be sent to the likes of Judge Reeves. Locals gathered in coffee shops and garages to devise their plan.
- Under the Friday night lights at Mississippi’s Brandon High School, the marching band was benched because the Christian hymn “How Great Thou Art” was a part of their halftime show — in violation of a federal court order. But during halftime of Friday night’s game - a lone voice began to sing the forbidden song. “Then sings my soul, my Savior God to Thee,” the singer sang. Then one by one people started to stand... At first, it started out as a hum but the sound got louder and louder as hundreds of people sang that old hymn together in the stadium in defiance to government edict and legal threat.⁹

I want to tell you that if we don’t use our freedom to defend our freedom, we will lose our freedom! So fourthly and finally...

IV. FREEDOM IS WORTH A FIGHT

Freedom must be protected and defended. We must fight to win it, and fight to keep it. Specifically, what can we do to preserve our freedom to express our faith openly and publicly in America?

Action Step 1: Pray: We must fight the battle, first of all, on our knees. We need to *pray* for God’s help. It all begins with prayer because without Him...we can do nothing. As David said: “I lift up my eyes to the hills—where does my help come from? My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth” (Psalm 121:1-2). Remember, the battle is the LORD’s!

Action Step 2: Proclaim: We must *proclaim* the good news. This is one of the biggest reasons for the mess we are in. See if we were sharing our faith, leading people to Jesus, and discipling them in the Word, there wouldn’t be all these hostile people, like abortionists, homosexual activists, atheists, renegade judges, liberal educators, and the like. Like the early church, we need to be unstoppable in speaking the things we have seen and heard from Jesus (Acts 4:20).

So it is high time for the church to rise up and speak up, not in a shrill, hateful way, but in a passionate and winsome way. Psalm 107:2 says: “Let the redeemed of the Lord say so.” And that’s you, and that’s me. This nation needs to hear again the voice of the Church of Jesus Christ, pulpits that proclaim the Gospel and flame with righteousness, churches that teach humility and holiness. Christian couples who get married and stay married, Christian parents teaching their kids right from wrong, the value of a hard day’s

work, loving their neighbor and their nation, duty to God and country, and sharing the good news about Jesus Christ with everyone, everywhere. Proclaim.

Action Step 3: Practice: We need to *practice* our faith everywhere in life. Life your faith! Outside of the Bible, the best argument for Jesus and the best argument against Jesus is the life of one who claims to be His follower. People would have more respect for our faith if we are living our faith. So “As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him.” (Col. 2:6).

Action Step 4: Participate: Jesus said to render to Caesar, and in America, where we have a government of the people, by the people, and for the people, we need to *participate*. If we don't, the devil and his people win by default. I mean, did Jesus only want us to be the Salt of the Sunday School and the Light of the Church? No! He wants us to make a positive impact and have a godly influence on everything everywhere, including government. So register to vote and vote your Christian values. Commend public servants who promote godly policies but confront those who promote ungodly policies. Consider supporting someone who lines up with how you believe on the issues. Some might be called to run for office as a public servant. We need some Daniels and Deborahs, some Esthers and Nehemiahs. We need more godly public servants on the City Council and School Board, as Mayor and Judges, as State Legislators and Senators, and yes as President. But we need to get off the sidelines and onto the battlefield!

We must answer the call to take a stand for freedom. I want to take you back to March 20, 1775. The Second Virginia Convention had convened at St. John's Church in Richmond to get out from under the watchful eye of the Loyalist Governor. They had assembled to consider some weighty matters concerning the tyranny and oppression of Parliament the King of England. George Washington, the Sword of the Revolution was there. Thomas Jefferson, the Pen of the Revolution was there.

A thirty-nine year old delegate from Hanover County, who became known as the Trumpet of the Revolution took a seat in the pew on the last day of the Convention, March 23. They opened in Prayer, approved the minutes and proceeded to business. He listened as many babbled on and on in favor of continued conciliatory measures, and he remembered some of the sermons that Patriot Pastor Samuel Davies had preached as he was growing up. His mom used to let him drive the wagon home if he could re-preach Pastor Davies Sunday sermon, and he became quite an orator.

And as he sat there in that pew in St. John's Church in Richmond, he must have recalled a sermon that Pastor Davies preached to the Hanover Military Academy entitled: “The Curse of Cowardice” from Jeremiah 48:10: “Cursed are those who refuse to do the LORD's work, who hold back their swords from shedding blood!”

So with the words of that sermon echoing down the halls of his memory, the delegate from Hanover rose from his pew to address the wavering assembly of Virginians and with great passion in his voice, this is some of what he said:

“Mr. President, it is natural to man to indulge in the illusions of hope... but... let us not deceive ourselves, sir... If we wish to be free... we must fight! I repeat it, sir, we must fight! An appeal to arms and to the God of hosts is all that is left us! They tell us, sir, that we are weak; unable to cope with so formidable an adversary. But when shall we be

stronger? Will it be the next week, or the next year? Will it be when we are totally disarmed, and when a British guard shall be stationed in every house? Shall we gather strength by irresolution and inaction...until our enemies shall have bound us hand and foot?

“Sir, we are not weak if we make a proper use of those means which the God of nature hath placed in our power. The millions of people, armed in the holy cause of liberty... are invincible by any force which our enemy can send against us. Besides, sir, we shall not fight our battles alone. There is a just God who presides over the destinies of nations, and who will raise up friends to fight our battles for us [2 Chron. 32:8]. The battle, sir, is not to the strong alone [Eccl. 9:11]; it is to the vigilant, the active, the brave. Besides, sir...There is no retreat but in submission and slavery! Our chains are forged! Their clanking may be heard on the plains of Boston! The war is inevitable--and let it come! I repeat it, sir, let it come.

“It is in vain, sir, to extenuate the matter. Gentlemen may cry, Peace, Peace-- but there is no peace [Jer. 6:14]. The war is actually begun! Our brethren are already in the field! Why stand we here idle [Matt. 20:6]? What is it that gentlemen 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!”

When Patrick Henry finished his passionate speech, the call rang out: “To arms! To arms!” and soon the Revolution became a reality. Christians in America need to start another Revolution. A Spiritual Revolution. The weapons of our warfare are not bayonets, muskets and canons. Our weapons are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds, casting down imaginations and every high thought that exalts itself against the knowledge of God. Believers have a belt of Truth, boots of Peace, a breastplate of Righteousness, a shield of Faith, a helmet of Salvation, and the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God!

So in the name of Almighty God, and for the sake of the Lord Jesus, and in the power of the Holy Spirit, I challenge you to renew your commitment to fight for freedom! Those who would silence us are surging all around us. They believe the victory is theirs, that they have won, and that this nation now belongs to them. But let us show them that they are wrong! Let us rise up, stand up, and speak up! Never give up, let up, or shut up ‘til they take us out or He takes us up!

Let us stand together for faith once delivered to the saints! Let’s stand together for the family, the foundation of a healthy society! Let’s stand together for our freedom, for which Christ has made us free! Let us lift up the blood stained banner of the cross of Christ, and stand up for Jesus! Stand up for Jesus!

Stand up for Jesus, ye soldiers of the cross! Lift high His royal banner, it must not suffer loss! From victory unto victory, His army shall He lead, til every foe is vanquished and Christ is Lord indeed!

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¹ Paul Leicester Ford, *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, the Knickerbocker Press, 1894), 3:267.

² From the Preamble of "The Declaration of Independence: The Unanimous Declaration of the Thirteen United States of America," as found in *One Nation Under God...: Our Founding Documents* (Nashville: For Faith & Family Publishing, nd), 11.

³<http://xroads.virginia.edu/CAP/LIBERTY/lazaruspoem.html>.

⁴ Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 2 vols., (New York: Vintage Books, 1945), 1:319.

⁵<http://touchstonemag.com/merecomments/2016/08/coach-joe-kennedy-fired-praying/>

⁶ <http://www.toddstarnes.com/column/sheriff-ordered-to-remove-blessed-are-the-peacemakers-decals>

⁷ <http://www.foxnews.com/opinion/2017/02/22/atheist-forces-school-to-drop-ten-commandments.html>

⁸ <http://www.toddstarnes.com/column/school-praying-for-a-colleague-is-unacceptable>.

⁹ <http://www.foxnews.com/opinion/2015/08/21/school-band-told-to-stop-performing-how-great-thou-art.html>