**By His Stripes We Are Healed (SR: Rom. 6:17f, 22)**

Yesterday, we celebrated the 239th anniversary of the signing of our national Declaration of Independence. It is a holiday of national reflection of the lives lost to guarantee our freedom from the, at the time, tyrannical British government. We are a free people, as a nation, because of the sacrifice of brave men and women who have laid down their lives, beginning in the Revolutionary War. My patriotism boils over as I consider the Revolutionary War, the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and our flag. I believe in the American dream; and I still believe in American freedom.

Since these ideals are on the mind of every American these days, it might be most prudent to redirect those energies to something even greater – the cross of Christ. In order to do that, let’s explore an *a minore ad maiorem* argument comparing our nation’s flag to the Lord Who died to give us an even greater freedom – spiritual freedom. I hope this creative and unique way of looking at the Christ will inspire you to pursue that freedom.

**I. Our Nation’s Flag**

 A. Commissioning:

 1. Betsy Ross is of course the woman who lays claim to the production of our first precursor to our flag. While we had flags before that, she developed the model for our current flag. She sewed her flag in May of 1776, about 6 weeks before signing of Declaration of Independence.

 2. It wasn’t until the addition of Hawaii as a state in 1959 that our current flag with 50 stars came into being.

B. Symbols taught and understood by the end of elementary school:

1. The banner – intimates the concept of unity

 2. The stripes – intimate the original 13 colonies

 3. The stars – represent the 50 states in our union

 C. Less known or less obvious is the consideration of the colors of our flag.

 1. Initially aesthetic, drawing from the influence of the flag of Great Britain.

 2. Each color was attributed with an inherent meaning in 1782 during the commissioning of the Great Seal of the United States.

 D. The Meaning of the Colors

1. *Red* – Hardiness, Valor, & Bravery – indicative of the blood of the battlefield

2. *White* – Purity & Innocence

3. *Blue* – Justice, Vigilance, & Perseverance

 E. Significance:

 1. Our flag is our nation’s way of signing her name to something.

 2. It is on the Moon, the top of Mount Everest, on satellites flying thru space.

 3. Our flag is the rallying point of our nation; it calls together brotherhood, unity, freedom; it calls to mind hardiness, valor, bravery, purity, innocence, justice, vigilance, and perseverance.

 4. But our flag can never convey what Jesus conveyed when He lived, breathed, & died for you and me. He gave us a freedom far superior to the hundreds of thousands of lives given for our terrestrial freedom.

**II. Christ, God’s Flag**

A. Many times in the OT, there is a demonstrable link b/w captivity & the promise of freedom. In numerous cases, God promises a banner of hope, i.e. a flag (e.g. Ex. 17:15; Ps. 60:4; SOS 2:4; Is. 11:12; 13:2; 18:3; 31:9; universal standard hinted at in the Law – Lev. 24:22; Num. 21:8; cf. Is. 5:26)

 B. Just as our flag demonstrates certain ideal qualities, so does Christ.

 1. *Hardiness, Valor, & Bravery* – Jesus was so courageous that despite His clear fear of dying on the Cross, He resolutely faced it to grant us life (Mt. 26:38ff). You see, a soldier is vaguely aware of death as a possibility but he knows not how or when it may happen. Jesus knew how and when it would happen and didn’t abandon His post.

 2. *Purity & Innocence* – Jesus possessed these attributes in spades (Jn. 1:29; 1Pet. 1:19; 1Jn. 3:3); He actually has vicariously granted these characteristics to believers (Heb. 10:22); they must be retained to see God (Phil. 2:15; Col. 1:22; 2Pet. 3:14)

 3. *Justice, Vigilance, & Perseverance* – He is both Just and the Justifier (Rom. 3:21-26; 5:1f; 1Cor. 6:11; Heb. 12:1-3); no soldier or government can realistically claim that type of perfection, objectivity, & balance

 C. While our flag represents an **ideal**, Christ represents a **reality**. He is God’s signature on our bond note (Mark 10:45).

 1. He is spiritual freedom & liberty (Lk. 19:10; Jn. 10:10; Gal. 5:1; Heb. 2:14f).

 2. He unites all people at the foot of the Cross (Jn. 12:32). By His stripes we are healed (Is. 53:5; 1Pet. 2:24f).

 3. He grants us citizenship in the true greatest nation (1Co. 12:13; Phil. 3:20f)

 4. And while we may be amazed if our flag still remains in the midst of conflict and oppression (".... And the rockets' red glare, the bombs bursting in air, Gave proof through the night that our flag was still there."), we can be assured that His flag will ever remain. He went to battle w/ Satan & has already achieved a victory over all his forces.

 We often are reticent to connect symbols to Christ for fear of following the dark road of those who would presume on God. But God has furnished us a clear beacon of hope, a banner of freedom in His Son, Jesus. He loves us so much that He allowed His Son to be erected on the most heinous flagpole ever devised. By His stripes, we are healed & set free.

 Do you want to make that sacrifice effective in your life? Do you want to be truly free? We can all be made free by remembering the banner of Christ, drawing near, and raising that banner in our hour of need. Be conformed to the image of Christ by laying down your life in baptism and repentance, calling on His name that you might be saved.