



Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death

Brownsburg Church of Christ

by Edwin Crozier

July 4, 2010

AM Assembly

Introduction:

“It is in vain, sir, to extenuate the matter. Gentlemen may cry, peace, peace -- but there is no peace. The war is actually begun! The next gale that sweeps from the north will bring to our ears the clash of resounding arms! Our brethren are already in the field! Why stand we here idle? 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!” On March 23, 1775, Patrick Henry addressed the Second Virginia Convention as they debated whether they should form an army in response to England’s military oppression. Henry’s speech convinced the convention and the military was funded in the Virginian colony. But Henry’s speech took on a life of its own. His concluding words became a rallying cry for all patriots stirring them to fight for freedom, even in the face of what seemed like certain defeat. His words have lived on even to our present day. Most of us, even if we did not know who said it or when, have heard the phrase, “Give me liberty or give me death!”

In Henry’s mind there were but two choices, freedom or death. The Bible presents these same two choices. Did Henry realize the biblical ring of his statement? I think perhaps he did. His entire speech is so filled with biblical allusion it is almost overwhelming. But while he used his statements to promote a non-biblical concern of liberty from governmental oppression, the original biblical sentiment is about something far greater. Henry was trying to convince a colonial legislature to fund an army and fight Britain; God is trying to convince sinners to take up arms and fight for freedom from sin and Satan. Whether we realize it or not, our options are actually the same as declared by Henry—Liberty or Death.

Discussion:

I. Death through sin, the tyrannical destroyer.

- A. The tyranny all mankind has faced is the tyranny of sin. **Romans 3:9-18, 23** describes our state of sinfulness. The first three chapters of **Romans** is devoted to proving that all men, whether Jews or Gentiles, have sinned.
- B. Like all tyrants, sin is a liar (**Romans 7:11**). Sin promises great things and feeds on our strongest desires—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life (**I John 2:16**). Sin tells us it will bring us peace, happiness, contentment, wealth, glory and fame. But in the end, sin only brings death (**Romans 6:20-23; James 1:14-16**).
- C. Not only death, sin wants to dominate. Paul describes the wretchedness of the sinner’s life in **Romans 7:14-24**. Because we have sinned, we have developed habits of sin. In fact, sin has taken over. The pathway of sin has become so worn in our minds and lives that despite our desires to take a different path, we, almost naturally, walk down the path of least resistance. Thus, despite our great intentions we find ourselves in the midst of sin over and over again. While we may not fully understand all of Paul’s statements in this passage, I believe we all know the feeling. We have all seen the wretchedness of sin and want to know how we can be free from this sin and death. How can we have liberty?

II. Liberty through God’s grace.

- A. First and foremost, we must understand that liberty will come through God’s grace. Our sins have already separated us from God (**Isaiah 59:2**). But God’s grace through Jesus Christ provides liberty from the law of sin and death that has plagued us from the time we first sinned. Paul demonstrates that in **Romans 8:1-4**. Jesus came as one of us to condemn sin in the flesh and to provide an offering for sin so our sins could be forgiven.
- B. Again in **Romans 3:21-26**, we see God’s grace demonstrated by His Son’s sacrifice. He was offered as a propitiation, through which we might be redeemed and justified. He paid the penalty for our sins. **Ephesians 2:8-9** nails it down. If we are to be saved, it will be by God’s grace. Praise God for His grace.

III. Liberty through surrender.

- A. Having said that, we must not misunderstand God’s grace. God’s grace is not given so we might live in sin (**Romans 6:1-2**). We are to die to sin. God’s grace is given that we might be victorious over sin. The only way to be victorious over sin is to surrender to a new master, to God in Jesus Christ (**Romans 6:8-11**).

- B. **Romans 6:12-19** says we are now slaves of righteousness, obedient to the teaching which freed us from sin. **Roman 8:5-8** says we must set our mind on the things of the Spirit and live by the Spirit. We must learn to value what the Spirit values. We must learn to love what the Spirit loves. We must learn to think as the Spirit thinks. Again, in **Romans 8:12-14**, Paul says we must live by the Spirit, putting to death the deeds of the body, being led by the Spirit. Despite what proponents of modern error teach, this does not happen by the Spirit taking over and forcing us to obey His will. This happens by us surrendering our lives to His will. It may seem a paradox, but we actually gain victory through surrender. We gain victory by giving up the fight and just following Jesus' lead.

IV. Liberty through baptism into Christ's death.

- A. So, how do we begin? We must be in Christ to have freedom from sin (**Romans 8:1**). But when is that freedom first enjoyed? **Romans 6:1-9** provides the abundantly clear answer to this question—baptism. Pay careful attention to these verses regarding all that happens in baptism. We die to sin (**vs. 2**). We enter Christ (**vs. 3**). We enter into His death (**vs. 3**). We are made alive in Christ, raised to walk in a new life (**vs. 4**). Our old sinful self was crucified with Christ (**vs. 6**). Our body of sin was brought to nothing (**vs. 6**). We are freed from sin (**vs. 7**). Death no longer has dominion over us (**vs. 9**).
- B. Where does the liberty begin? It begins when we submit to Christ in baptism, participating in the likeness of His death, burial and resurrection. Interestingly, many today look at this passage and claim baptism is nothing more than a symbol. However, this passage declares far more than that. Is baptism symbolic? It certainly is. It is symbolic of us following in the footsteps of Jesus, dying, being buried and then being raised to walk in newness of life. But as we go through that symbolic act, very real salvation takes place. We must not discount baptism because of its symbolism. Rather, we must go through the symbolism to gain the real liberty.

Conclusion:

“Give me liberty or give me death” was Patrick Henry’s plea to the Virginia Convention. God’s statement to us is that we will either have liberty or we will have death. Which one do you want? The choice is yours. When Henry made his plea, the convention was swayed to enter the fight for freedom. God has made His plea to you; will you be swayed to resist the devil and die to sin, being made free in God? Why not begin that battle for freedom from sin right now? Why not obey God today in baptism for the remission of your sins?