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The Speech of Freedom

Memorial Day Sunday

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Grace Doctrine Church

Chesterfield, Missouri

Joe Griffin

Pastor

Introduction:

On Memorial Day 1991, I presented a special entitled *The Speech of Freedom*. It was in response to our nation's successful conclusion of the Gulf War and in elation to the return home of troops who served there including from our congregation, Brett Turner, Vic Modeer, and Ron Willard.

Today, sixteen years later, this congregation has some of its members once again in harm's way in the current Islamic War: Tyler Risty and Matt Wojciechowski. Also on active duty serving overseas are Debby Danyluk in England and Brett Turner in Germany. Serving on active duty stateside are Mark Davey, Lee Hatfield, Hal Keistler, and Mike Modeer.

It is the unflagging efforts of these people plus thousands more that are doing their part in suppressing an evil that intends to destroy Western culture and replace it with the seventh-century image of Islam. This is a threat that has not been taken seriously by our nation's political leaders and unfortunately most of the nation's citizens. The bloody result is inevitable as our porous southern border allows foreign nationals to infiltrate and disburse among the several states. As they assume the nature of fish in the stream of American life they become a Fifth Column that waits patiently to seize an opportunity to unleash violence upon innocent people and hurl this country into the throes of historical reality: that we are at war with Islam.

We are in danger of discovering tragically the price a nation must pay for not taking seriously the presence of a known enemy, or worse, not recognizing the overt proclamations of terrorist leaders as representative of a real and imminent threat. And worse yet, the refusal to recognize there is really even a threat at all.

There have been numerous occasions throughout history when nations have faced an enemy that is apparently stronger than them but because of courage, fortitude, grit, and faith have ridden the tide of divine Providence to victory. In the course of the action some have fallen, some have died, and some have emerged unscathed. Such events and their survivors have written a tale that tells the story of victory or reports have been made by others in play, song, and story.

So now I present what I trust will be a stirring recitation of martial oratory; an anthology of pre-war rhetoric whose fire and spice inspired men to battle along with several post-war eulogies whose eloquence and humility paid tribute to those who engaged the battles and brought comfort to the grateful beneficiaries of victorious armies.

Henry V at Agincourt:

Our survey of *The Speech of Freedom* begins October 25, 1415 during the middle of the **Hundred Years' War**, an intermittent series of battles between England and France over disputed lands in Normandy. On this date, the English under **King Henry V** were victorious in one of the major battles of western history. Outnumbered five to one, the British engaged the army of France led by its supreme military commander, Constable **Charles Albret \äl-bre**, at the **Battle of Agincourt \ä-zhan-kür'**.

As the moment of truth arrived on the morning of the twenty-fifth, King Henry challenged his troops to win a victory on **St. Crispin's Day**, which commemorated the martyrdom imposed by Roman emperor Maximian \mak-sim'-ē-an\ upon twin third-century missionaries to Northern France: Crispin \kris'-pin\ and Crispinian \kris-pin'-ē-an\. King Henry's oration is paraphrased by:

> **Shakespeare, William. *The Life of King Henry the Fifth*. In *Great Books of the Western World: Shakespeare: Vol.* 1. Edited by Robert Maynard Hitchens. (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1952), 26:555-56, 561:**

Act 4, scene 3. *The English camp*.

Enter GLOUCHESTER, BEDFORD, EXETER, ERPINGHAM, *with all his host*: SALISBURY and WESTMORELAND.

Glou. Where is the King?
Bed. The King himself is rode to view their battle.
West. Of fighting men they have full three score thousand.
Exe. There's five to one; besides, they all are fresh.
Sal. God's arm strike with us! 'tis a fearful odds.
God be with you, princes all; I'll to my charge:
If we no more meet till we meet in heaven,
Then, joyfully, my noble Lord of Bedford,
My dear Lord Gloucester, and My good Lord Exeter,
And my kind kinsman, warriors all, adieu!
Bed. Farewell, good Salisbury; and good luck go with thee.
Exe. Farewell, kind lord; fight valiantly to-day:
And yet I do thee wrong to mind thee of it,
For thou art framed of the firm truth of valour.
Exit Salisbury.
Bed. He is as full of valour as of kindness;

Princely in both.

Enter the King

West. O that we now had here
But one the thousand of those men in England
That do no work to-day!
K. Hen. What's he that wishes so?
My cousin Westmorland. No, my fair cousin:
If we are marked to die, we are enough
To do our country loss; and if to live,
The fewer men, the greater share of honour.
God's will, I pray thee, wish not one man more.
By Jove, I am not covetous for gold,
Nor care I who doth feed upon my cost;
It yearns me not if men my garments wear;
Such outward things dwell not in my desires:
But if it be a sin to covet honour,
I am the most offending soul alive.
No, faith, my coz, wish not a man from England:
God's peace, I would not lose so great an honour
As one man more, methinks, would share from me
For the best hope I have. O, do not wish one more!
Rather proclaim it, Westmoreland, through my host,
That he which hath no stomach to this fight,
Let him depart. His passport shall be made
And crowns for convoy put into his purse:
We would not die in that man's company
That fears his fellowship to die with us.
This day is called the Feast of Crispian:
He that outlives this day, and comes safe home,
Will stand a-tiptoe when the day is named,
And rouse him at the name of Crispian.
He that shall see this day and live t'old age,
Will yearly on the vigil feast his neighbours,
And say "To-morrow is Saint Crispian":
Then will he strip his sleeve and show his scars
And say "These wounds I had on Crispin's day."

Old men forget: yet all shall be forgot,
But he'll remember with advantages
What feats he did that day. Then shall our names,
Familiar in his mouth as household words
Harry the King, Bedford and Exeter,
Warwick and Talbot, Salisbury and Gloucester,
Be in their flowing cups freshly remembered.

This story shall the good man teach his son;
And Crispin Crispian shall ne'er go by,
From this day to the ending of the world,
But we in it shall be remember'd;
We few, we happy few, we band of brothers;
For he today that sheds his blood with me
Shall be my brother; be he ne'er so vile,
This day shall gentle his condition:
And gentlemen in England now abed
Shall think themselves accursed they were not here,
And hold their manhoods cheap while any speaks
That fought with us upon Saint Crispin's day.
(pp. 555-56)

The outnumbered English forces won a stunning victory over the better equipped French who suffered the loss of the Constable, twelve members of highest nobility, some 1,500 knights and about 4,500 men-at-arms. English losses were negligible. When told of their small number King Henry said:

K. Hen. O God, thy arm was here;
And not to us, but to thy arm alone,
Ascribe we all! When, without stratagem,
But in plain shock and even play of battle,
Was ever known so great and little loss
On one part and on the other? Take it, God,
For it is none but thine! (4,8,111-17)
(p. 561)

This victory made Henry the diplomatic mediator of Europe. Historians observe that Henry found his nation weak and drifting and after nine years left it dominant in Europe. The victory at Agincourt began England's emergence as a military power. The commonwealth thus began to prepare itself to become a client nation to God. A hundred years later, following the Protestant Reformation, it would welcome the teaching of orthodox doctrine.

Patrick Henry: "Liberty or Death":

By the end of the century, Christopher Columbus [Italian: Christoforo Colombo \kris-tō-fō′-rō kō-lōm′-bō\; *Spanish*: Cristóbal Colon \kris-tō′-val co-lown′\] had discovered the New World. Shortly thereafter, European explorers began to establish colonies there.

In 1517, God's perfect timing ushered in the Protestant Reformation—a sudden rediscovery of the immutable truths found in the Scripture. Those who followed the teaching of Martin Luther soon found themselves at odds not only with the established church but with the laws of their respective conturies. Through divine guidance, the pivot reorganized and moved over the Atlantic to North America and began settling in the colonies.

The first settlement was at Jamestown, Virginia, which just celebrated its 400th anniversary complete with a visit from Queen Elizabeth II of England.

By 1775, the pivot was well-established in North America. Very shortly, Jesus Christ would again control history on behalf of that pivot. For ten years, **King George III** and Parliament had been imposing on the colonies a series of oppressive tax laws. The Americans protested the crown's refusal to allow them representation in parliament but to no avail. Each of their petitions always expressed a desire that these unjust laws be repealed and the colonies' relationship with England returned to its former tranquility.

Continued obstinance from England allowed some colonials to consider thoughts of independence. This soon became part of a rising tide in favor of armed resistance when they learned the British had sent troops to Boston. The king's forces had closed the port and garrisoned the city. The king appointed as military governor for Massachusetts Bay colony **Gen. Thomas Gage**, formally commander-in-chief of England's forces in North America, headquartered in New York City. In all King George had ordered fourteen regiments into Boston and his ships cruised its harbor.

Down in Virginia, the House of Burgesses assembled at Richmond's St. John's Church on March 23, 1775. The debate concentrated on the volatile state of affairs with the Mother Country. One of the delegates, Patrick Henry, who represented Hanover County, decided to recommend that the colony place itself in an immediate state of defense.

The opposition argued that a further petition should be extended before they became so bold as to muster troops. Henry's response provided the spark which set the colonial mind firmly on the course of independence. His words continue to inspire every generation of Americans and his warnings are as valid now as they were then. When Patrick Henry arose to speak he addressed the president of the assembly, Peyton Randolph from Williamsburg:

Lecky, Robert, Jr. *The Proceedings of the Virginia Convention of 1775.* (Richmond: St. John's Church, 1927), 8-:

Patrick Henry: Mr. President.

The President: The gentleman from Hanover.

Mr. Henry: I beg to offer the following resolutions:

"Resolved, That a well-regulated militia is the natural strength and only security of a free government;

"That the establishment of such a militia is, at this time, peculiarly necessary for the protection and defense of the country, and that the known remissness of the government in calling us together in legislative capacity renders it too insecure in this time of danger and distress to rely that any provision will be made to secure our inestimable rights and liberties from those further violations with which they are threatened.

"Resolved, therefore, That this Colony be immediately put into a state of defense and that a committee be named by the Convention to prepare a plan for embodying, arming, and disciplining such a number of men as may be sufficient for that purpose." (p. 8)

Richard Henry Lee: Mr. President.

The President: The gentleman from Westmoreland County.

Mr. Lee: I rise to second the resolutions of the gentleman from Hanover. I think they are timely and highly important. No member can question the fact that our state of affairs is very alarming. Sir, I yield to no man in proper loyalty to the King, but I will not agree to the sacrifice of a single particle of our inalienable privileges to any person on earth. We use but a natural right in making provision for our protection, we mean no aggression, no violence, no treason, but if the powers in England choose to regard this action as such, on them will fall the responsibility of the course taken by them. I hate to contemplate the possibility of collision with the mother country, and I know our weaknesses. But nature has come to our aid by spreading 3,000 miles of water between us and her, and if we have our disadvantages, so has England. It will put her at a vast disadvantage to have to transport over such a distance, in the contingency of war, her armies and supplies. But, sir, admitting the probable calculations to be against us, I will say with our immortal bard:

> "Thrice is he armed that hath his quarrel just;
> And he but naked, though lock'd up in steel,
> Whose conscience with injustice is corrupted."

Benjamin Harrison: Mr. President.

The President: The gentleman from Charles City.

Mr. Harrison: I desire to raise my voice in opposition to the adoption of the resolutions at this time. I consider them as rash and inexpedient. The report from England, as we all know, is that our petition to the King passed at the late Convention has been graciously received. No sufficient time has passed for a reply to come to us.

I am as warm a friend of liberty as any man in this Convention, and as little disposed to submit, but national civility and filial respect demand that we should do nothing hastily, offer no provocation.

Thomas Jefferson: Mr. President.

The President: The gentleman from Albemarle.

Mr. Jefferson: I am sorry to disagree with my friend from Charles City. I love him for his great heart and know his sturdy character for independence. But, sir, the colony should be prepared. I recognize no allegiance to parliament—only to the King of England. England is tied to the Empire by the tie of the Crown only and is a self-governing dominion; and I regard these acts of Parliament—attempting to tax our people and shutting up the port of Boston, as the acts of a foreign power which should, by all means in our power, be resisted. I call earnestly upon the Convention to support the resolution. (p. 9)

Mr. Edmund Pendleton: Mr. President.

The President: The gentleman from Caroline.

Mr. Pendleton: I hope this Convention will proceed slowly before rushing the country to war. Is this a moment to disgust our friends in England who are laboring for the repeal of the unjust taxes which afflict us, to extinguish all the conspiring sympathies which are working in our favor, to turn their friendship into hatred, their pity into revenge? Are we ready for war? Where are our stores—where are our arms—where our soldiers—where our money, the sinews of war? They are nowhere to be found in sufficient force or abundance to give us reasonable hope of successful resistance. In truth, we are poor and defenseless, and should strike when it becomes absolutely necessary—not before. And yet the gentlemen in favor of this resolution talk of assuming the front of war, of assuming it, too, against a nation one of the most formidable in the world. A nation ready and armed at all points; her navy riding in triumph in every sea; her armies never marching but to certain victory. For God's sake, Mr. President, let us be patient—let us allow all reasonable delay, and then if worse comes to be worst, we will have no feelings of blame. Give a little time, take no hostile action. Our ills will pass away and the sunshine of the halcyon days of old will come back again.

Mr. Robert Carter Nicholas: Mr. President.

The President: The gentleman from James City.

Mr. Nicholas: I agree heartily with the gentleman from Caroline. I consider the resolutions of the gentleman from Hanover as hasty, rash and unreasonable. But, more than that, I deem the militia upon which the gentleman depends as wholly insufficient. It will prove the bane of the war into which the gentleman from Hanover wishes to hurry us. Sir, I hope this resolution will be voted down. (p. 10)

Thomas Nelson:Mr. President.

The President: The gentleman from York county.

Mr. Nelson: I am a merchant of Yorktown, but I am a Virginian first. Let my trade perish. I call God to witness that if any British troops are landed in the County of York, of which I am lieutenant, I will wait for no orders, but will summon the militia and drive the invaders into the sea.

Mr. Henry*:* Mr. President.

The President: The gentleman from Hanover.

Mr. Henry: Mr. President. No man thinks more highly than I do of the patriotism, as well as abilities, of the very worthy gentlemen who have just addressed the house. But different men often see the same subject in different lights; and, therefore, I hope it will not be thought disrespectful to those gentlemen if, entertaining as I do opinions of a character very opposite to theirs, I shall speak forth my sentiments freely and without reserve. This is no time for ceremony. The question before the house is one of awful moment to this country. For my own part, I consider it as nothing less than a question of freedom or slavery; and in proportion to the magnitude of the subject ought to be the freedom of the debate. It is only in this way that we can hope to arrive at the truth, and fulfill the great responsibility which we hold to God and our country. Should I keep back my opinions at such a time, through fear of giving offense, I should consider myself as guilty of treason towards my country and of an act of disloyalty toward the Majesty of Heaven, which I revere above all earthly kings.

Mr. President, it is natural to man to indulge in the illusions of hope. We are apt to shut our eyes against a painful truth, and listen to the song of that siren till she transforms us into beasts. Is this the part of wise men, engaged in a great and arduous struggle for liberty? Are we disposed to be of the numbers of those who, having eyes, see not, and, having ears, hear not, the things which so nearly concern their temporal salvation? For my part, whatever anguish of spirit it may cost, I am willing to know the whole truth, to know the worst, and to provide for it. (p. 11)

I have but one lamp by which my feet are guided, and that is the lamp of experience. I know of no way of judging of the future but by the past. And judging by the past, I wish to know what there has been in the conduct of the British ministry for the last ten years to justify those hopes with which gentlemen have been pleased to solace themselves and the house. Is it that insidious smile with which our petition has been lately received? Trust it not, sir; it will prove a snare to your feet. Suffer not yourselves to be betrayed with a kiss.

Ask yourselves how this gracious reception of our petition comports with those warlike preparations which cover our waters and darken our land. Are fleets and armies necessary to a work of love and reconciliation? Have we shown ourselves so unwilling to be reconciled that force must be called in to win back our love? Let us not deceive ourselves, sir. These are the implements of war and subjugation; the last arguments to which kings resort. I ask gentlemen, sir, what means this martial array, if its purpose be not to force us to submission? Can gentlemen assign any other possible motive for it? Has Great Britain any enemy, in this quarter of the world, to call for all this accumulation of navies and armies? No, sir, she has none. They are meant for us: they can be meant for no other. They are sent over to bind and rivet upon us those chains which the British ministry have been so long forging.

And what have we to oppose to them? Shall we try argument? Sir, we have been trying that for the last ten years. Have we anything new to offer upon the subject? Nothing. We have held the subject up in every light of which it is capable; but it has been all in vain.

Shall we resort to entreaty and humble supplication? What terms shall we find which have not been already exhausted? Let us not, I beseech you, sir, deceive ourselves. Sir, we have done everything that could be done to avert the storm which is now coming on. We have petitioned; we have remonstrated; we have supplicated; we have prostrated ourselves before the throne, and have implored its interposition to arrest the tyrannical hands of the ministry and Parliament. Our petitions have been slighted; our remonstrances have produced additional violence and insult; our supplications have been disregarded; and we have been spurned, with contempt, from the foot of the throne! In vain, after these things, may we indulge the fond hope of peace and reconciliation.

There is no longer any room for hope. If we wish to be free—if we mean to preserve inviolate those inestimable privileges for which we have been so long contending--if we mean not basely to abandon the noble struggle in which we have been so long engaged, and which we have pledged ourselves never to abandon until the glorious object of our contest shall be obtained--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! (p. 12)

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? Shall we acquire the means of effectual resistance by lying supinely on our backs and hugging the delusive phantom of hope, 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. Three millions of people, armed in the holy cause of liberty, and in such a country as that which we possess, 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.

The battle, sir, is not to the strong alone; it is to the vigilant, the active, the brave. Besides, sir, we have no election. If we were base enough to desire it, it is now too late to retire from the contest. 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. (pp. 12-13)

> 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! (p. 13)

Having heard Henry's stirring address and its unarguable logic, President Randolph recognized the gentleman from Fairfax:

> *George Washington:* Mr. President, I am a soldier and believe in being prepared. For that and other reasons, I will give my vote for the resolutions of the gentleman from Hanover. Rather than submit to the present condition of things, I will raise one thousand men, subsist them at my own expense, and march at their head to the relief of Boston.

It is the thought possessed by men like George Washington, Richard Henry Lee, Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Nelson, Jr., Andrew Lewis, and others that enabled the burgesses to pass Patrick Henry's resolutions. This thought on that day led to the most crucial decision in our nation's history. It allowed George Washington to organize an army for the Colony of Virginia which later put him in position to become the commanding general of the Continental Army that ultimately won the final victory at Yorktown over Gen. Charles Cornwallis and secured our Independence that has endured for over 230 years.

The Blue and the Gray:

Eighty-five years after Henry's stirring address, another war for independence was waged between the grandsons of the very men who fought the British from Lexington Green all the way to Yorktown. The **War between the States** consumed the flower of American youth as 264,000 Union soldiers and 135,000 Confederate troops were killed during the four-year struggle. Many military cemeteries contain the remains of both Northern and Southern soldiers. A tradition was developed following the war by mourners who, when visiting these burial sites, would place remembrances on the grave markers of both armies' dead.

Honorable men often see the same subject in different lights. Gentlemen, however, never cast aspersion on an opponent who gave his life for what he believed to be right. Thus, proper respect is graciously paid to their memories. This spirit of accommodation, which developed immediately after the war's end, is soberly expressed the poignant poem by Francis Miles Finch:

Hill, Lois (ed.). *Poems and Songs of the Civil War*. (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1996), 156-57:

"The Blue and the Gray"
(Francis Miles Finch, 1827-1907)

By the flow of the inland river,
Whence the fleets of iron have fled,
Where the blades of the grave-grass quiver,
Asleep are the ranks of the dead:
Under the sod and the dew,
Waiting the judgment-day;
Under the one, the Blue
Under the other, the Gray.

These in the robings of glory,
Those in the gloom of defeat,
All with the battle-blood gory,
In the dusk of eternity meet:
Under the sod and the dew,
Waiting the judgment-day;
Under the laurel, the Blue
Under the willow, the Gray.

From the silence of sorrowful hours
The desolate mourners go,
Lovingly laden with flowers
Alike for the friend and the foe:

Under the sod and the dew,
Waiting the judgment-day;
Under the roses, the Blue
Under the lilies, the Gray.

So with an equal splendor,
The morning sun-rays fall.
With a touch impartially tender,
On the blossoms blooming for all:
Under the sod and the dew,
Waiting the judgment-day;
Broidered with gold, the Blue,
Mellowed with gold, the Gray.

So, when the summer calleth,
On forest and field of grain,

With an equal murmur falleth
The cooling drip of the rain:
Under the sod and the dew,
Waiting the judgment-day;
Wet with the rain, the Blue,
Wet with the rain, the Gray.

Sadly, but not with upbraiding,
The generous deed was done,
In the storm of the years that are fading
No braver battle was won:
Under the sod and the dew,
Waiting the judgment-day;
Under the blossoms, the Blue,
Under the garlands, the Gray.

No more shall the war cry sever,
Or the winding rivers be red;
They banish our anger forever
When they laurel the graves of our dead!
Under the sod and the dew,
Waiting the judgment-day;
Love and tears for the Blue,
Tears and love for the Gray.

Douglas A. MacArthur: "Duty, Honor, Country":

No American military leader could possibly have had a keener understanding of the sound and smell of war than did Gen. Douglas A. MacArthur. He saw combat in four of our nation's wars: the Mexican Campaign, World Wars I and II, and the Korean Campaign. He was allied commander of the Pacific theatre in World War II during which he was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for his actions in the battles of the Bataan Peninsula in 1942. He was also commander of UN forces during much of the Korean War.

No better spokesman than he could more precisely summarize the art of war, express a more sensitive understanding of the sacrifices required of its participants as well as their loved ones, offer a more perceptive view of its action or more clearly comprehend the responsibilities of its combatants.

MacArthur's last major address before his death was before the graduating class at West Point on 12 May 1962. His comments offer perceptive insight into the strength of character which must be indelibly ingrained into every soldier's soul if he is to honorably defend the colors of this client nation.

