

Scars and Stripes

By: Brian Baer

Independence Day is a treasured holiday. We look to the American flag as the symbol of our freedom. It reminds us of those who have paid the ultimate sacrifice for the freedoms we often take for granted. I would like to take this time to thank the countless number of men and women who have served and are currently serving our country at home and abroad. Anyone who would put their life on the line for our country deserves the ultimate respect and admiration.

The American flag has 13 red and white stripes which represent the original 13 colonies of the United States. The 50 stars represent the existing states. The color blue stands for bravery. Red stands for the blood and white stands for purity. It is my belief that my generation as well as those behind me do not fully appreciate the freedom, justice and liberty that the American flag symbolizes. It has been a beacon in the night for many who have stood for America.

Francis Scott Key was a very devout Christian who has written many hymns. However, during the war of 1812 he would pen the words that would forever change a country. On August 12, 1814, he went to Baltimore to pick up a friend who had been released from the British. While he was there, an attack was made on Baltimore. So Key and his friend were left on the boat overnight. They could not sleep and feared for their life. They paced the deck waiting for the first break of morning to see the result of war. As the night progressed, Key was moved by the brilliant lights and sound of war. He began to write some notes on a scrap of paper. When the dawn's early light broke, the first thing they saw were the broad stripes and bright stars. Key went back home and put music to his words, which he entitled, '*The Star Spangled Banner.*' We are familiar with the first verse but let me share with you the words to the last stanza:

*Oh! thus be it ever, when freemen shall stand
Between their loved homes and the war's desolation!
Blest with victory and peace, may the heaven-rescued land
Praise the Power that hath made and preserved 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!*

Many years before Betsy Ross sewed the symbol of freedom, another patriotic act took place on a lowly hill called Golgotha. The scars and stripes of our Savior were not beautiful to look upon but they are the reason we have freedom from sin. Just as the soldiers of this great land have given their lives for our physical freedom, Christ paid the ultimate sacrifice for our eternal freedom. "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death" (Romans 8:2).

