



Counting the Cost

“Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won’t you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it?” (Luke 14:28)

The Soldier’s bumper sticker declares, *“Freedom is not free—it is paid for with blood.”*

Once a year America assembles to ask, *“How much?”*

We would prefer if the bill were submitted in dollar amounts. A billion dollars for military spending? A trillion appropriated for defense? We are used to such figures. We wave them off.

But Memorial Day will not let us go with just a shrug. It confronts us with the bill for freedom totaled, not with the number of dollars, but with the count of tombstones.

It points us to the famous gathering of markers at places like Arlington National Cemetery and Flanders Fields. It won’t let us overlook the ones tucked away next to small churches on country roads. These, too, must be counted.

We are not building a tower. We are constructing a free country. The question of Jesus takes on greater importance as the importance of the project increases.

Memorial Days keep asking us, *“How much does freedom cost?”*

That makes us ask, *“Is it worth the price?”*

Our forefathers answered with conviction. They backed their words with action. They paid the price. Those military tombstones are our receipt.

And today? What is the answer of this generation?

Some wonder.

But not the Lord God.

He already knows what the answer of this generation of Americans will be. He knows the answer from the generation after that.

But those answers are immaterial. They are not the ones that count.

The critical question is, *“What is God’s answer?”*

The Soldier’s statement is correct: freedom is not free. It has, indeed, been bought with blood. But the blood of a billion Americans could not buy one minute of freedom if it had not already been purchased by the blood of Jesus.

Of America, we sing: *“God shed his grace on thee!”*

That grace is in the form of bloodshed.

If it were his will, America could be protected from deadly attack without one weapon used—as Jerusalem was kept safe from Assyrian attack when the Angel of Death destroyed Sennacherib’s army.

If it be his will, the defenses of America’s enemies could crumble as easily as Jericho’s walls before the sound of a trumpet.

But the Lord God does not usually act that way. He wants his people to know that there is a higher power than patriotism.

But honorable patriotism is a gift from that Higher Power.

Any freedom we enjoy was first bought by the Son of God.

He counted the cost and he paid it—with his blood.

