

[Star Spangled Banner As You've Never Heard It!](#)

We Remember... September, 11th 2001

The Star Spangled Banner as You've Never Heard It

There was a lawyer once; his name was Francis Scott Key. He penned a song that I'm sure you're aware of – you've seen it – it's in most hymnals throughout our churches. It's called, The National Anthem. It is our song as an American. We go, however, to a ball game, we stand in our church services, and we sing the words of that song. And they float over our minds and our lips, and we don't even realize what we're singing. Most of us have memorized it as a child, but we've never really thought about what it means.

Let me tell you a story. Francis Scott Key was a lawyer in Baltimore. The Colonies were engaged in vicious conflict with the mother country, Britain. Because of this conflict, and the protractedness of it, they had accumulated prisoners on both sides. The American Colonies had prisoners and the British had prisoners. And the American government initiated a move. They went to the British and they said, "Let us negotiate for the release of these prisoners." They said, "We want to send a man out to discuss this with you." They were holding the American prisoners in boats about a thousand yards offshore. And they said, "We want to send a man by the name of Francis Scott Key. He will come out and negotiate to see if we can make a mutual exchange."

On the appointed day, in a rowboat, he went out to this boat and he negotiated with the British officials. And they reached a conclusion that men could be exchanged on a one-for-one basis. Francis Scott Key, jubilant with the fact that he'd been successful went down below in the boats and what he found was a cargo hold full of humanity; men. And he said, "Men, I've got news for you. Tonight you are free." He said, "Tonight, I have negotiated successfully your return to the Colonies." He said, "You'll be taken out of this boat; out of this filth; out of your chains."

As he went back up on board to arrange for their passage to the shore, the Admiral came and he said, "We have a slight problem." He said, "We will still honor our commitment to release these men, but it'll be merely academic after tonight. It won't matter." And Francis Scott Key said, "What do you mean?" And he said, "Well, Mr. Key," he said, "Tonight, we have laid an ultimatum upon the Colonies. Your people will either capitulate and lay down the colors of that flag that you think so much of, or you see that fort right over there – Fort Henry?" He said, "We're gonna remove it from the face of the earth." He said, "How are you gonna do that?"

He said, "If you will, scan the horizon of the sea." And as he looked, he could see hundreds of little dots, and he said, "That's the entire British war fleet." He said, "All of the gun power, all of the

armament is being called upon to demolish that fort. It will be here within striking distance in a matter of about two and a half hours." He said, "The war is over. These men would be free anyway." He said, "You can't shell that fort." He said, "That's, that's a large fort." He said, "It's full of women and children." He says, "It's predominantly not a military fort."

He said, "Don't worry about it." They said, "We've left them a way out." And he said, "What's that?" He said, "Do you see that flag way up on the rampart?" He said, "We have told them that if they will lower that flag the shelling will stop immediately, and we'll know that they've surrendered. And you'll now be under British rule." Francis Scott Key went down below and told the men what was about to happen. And they said, "How many ships?" He said, "Hundreds." The ships got closer. Francis Scott Key went back up on top and he said, "Men, I'll shout down to you what's going on as we watch." As twilight began to fall, and as the haze hung over the ocean as it does at sunset, suddenly the British war fleet unleashed. Bam!

He says, "The sound was deafening. There were so many guns that there were no reliefs." He said it was absolutely impossible to talk or hear. He said, "Suddenly the sky, although dark, was suddenly lit." And he says from down below all he could hear the men, the prisoners, saying was, "Tell us where the flag is. What have they done with the flag? Is the flag still flying over the rampart? Tell us." One hour, two hours, three hours into the shelling every time the bomb would explode and it would be close to the flag, they could see the flag in the illuminated red glare of that bomb. And Francis Scott Key would report down to the men below, "It's still up. It's not down."

The Admiral came and he said, "Your people are insane." He said, "What's the matter with them?" He said, "Don't they understand this is an impossible situation?" Francis Scott Key said he remembered what George Washington had said. He said, "The thing that sets the American Christian apart from all other people in the world is he will die on his feet before he'll live on his knees." The Admiral said, "We have now instructed all of the guns to focus on the rampart to take that flag down." He said, "We don't understand something. Our reconnaissance tells us that that flag has been hit directly again and again and again and yet it's still flying. We don't understand that." But he said, "Now, we're about to bring every gun for the next three hours to bear on that point."

Francis Scott Key said the barrage was unmerciful. All that he could hear was the men down below praying the prayer, "God, keep that flag flying where we last saw it." Sunrise came. He said there was a heavy mist hanging over the land, but the rampart was tall enough. There stood the flag, completely nondescript, in shreds. The flagpole itself was at a crazy angle, but the flag was still at the top. Francis Scott Key went aboard, and immediately went into Fort Henry to see what had happened. And what he found had happened was that that flagpole and that flag had suffered repetitious direct hits, and when hit had fallen.

But men, fathers, who knew what it meant for that flag to be on the ground – although knowing that all of the British guns were trained on it – walked over and held it up, humanly, until they died. Their bodies were removed and others took their place. Francis Scott Key said what held that flagpole in place at that unusual angle were patriots bodies. He penned the song, “Oh, say can you see by the dawn’s early light, what so proudly we hailed at the twilight’s last gleaming. O’er rocket’s red glare, the bombs bursting in air, gave proof through the night that the flag was still there. Oh, say does that Star-Spangled Banner yet fly and wave, o’er the land of the free and the home of the brave?”

The debt was demanded, the price it was paid.

Star Spangled Banner Lyrics, Today:

Oh, say can you see by the dawn’s early light?

What so proudly we hailed at the twilight’s last gleaming?

Whose broad stripes and bright stars through the perilous fight?

O’er the ramparts we watched were so gallantly streaming?

And the rocket’s red glare,

The bombs bursting in air,

Gave proof through the night,

That our flag was still there.

Oh, say does that Star-Spangled Banner yet wave

O’er the land of the free and the home of the brave?

Oh say, does that star-spangled banner yet wave?

O’er the land of the free and the home of the brave.

Blessed is the nation whose God is The Lord

-Psalm 33:12