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Liberty's Motivation

On July 8, 1776, the deep, echoing tones of the liberty bell floated down from Independence Hall. The town replied with valiant cries for independence. However, it wasn't until seven years later that they had their first taste of freedom – freedom that was made sweet by the blood of thousands who sacrificed their lives for its sake. Benjamin Franklin once said, “Where liberty is, there is my country.” What better motivator could any fighting man have than this great prospect of liberty?

According to the modern day Oxford dictionary, liberty is “the state of being free within society from oppressive restrictions,” but this definition leaves much undefined. The true definition of liberty varies from person to person because no two people experience exactly the same oppressive restrictions. To a slave in 1860, liberty meant civil rights and equality. To a Jew during the Holocaust, liberty meant freedom of religion and freedom from persecution. And today – to me – what does liberty mean?

When I was in third grade, my mom gave birth to my younger sister. Within a week after birth, she was diagnosed with Zellweger's. This rare disease meant that her life would be one of pain and suffering. And it was. She experienced everything from seizures to kidney stones to severe lung problems. If it had been possible for her to say it, she would have told us just how much being released from years of pain meant to her. And she was released. On September 13, 2012, she was liberated from it all in a peaceful death.

I would never describe liberty the same way as her. My life does not carry the same darkening shade of physical pain. I have many more talents and abilities. I am not limited by a rare muscle disease. I have freedom already. I was born with it.

This freedom is not just liberty from the bitter disease that clenched my sister in its iron fingers. It's liberty from anything that prevents me from being “free within society from oppressive restrictions.” I have never known the oppressive restrictions that bind other societies under a heartless, controlling dictator. I have never felt the hard and oppressing sting of a slave driver's restricting whip tear through the raw flesh on my back. And these are not the only things that I have never felt. There are thousands of other unshared stories, and every one of them contains people suffering from a lack of liberty.

I have never been truly qualified to join in those stories, and the fact that I can say this is extremely valuable to me. A very small percent of the world's population has experienced my kind of liberty. My kind of liberty is total liberty. And why am I in the very small percent that has experienced this? Couldn't it have just as easily been someone else?

Maybe that is why liberty carries so much value; there is never enough to go around. Too few people have the opportunity to experience it. Therefore, when one realizes how much freedom they truly have, it should be a motivator. And that's exactly what liberty is to me. It's a motivator to do great things... because I have the freedom to do so!