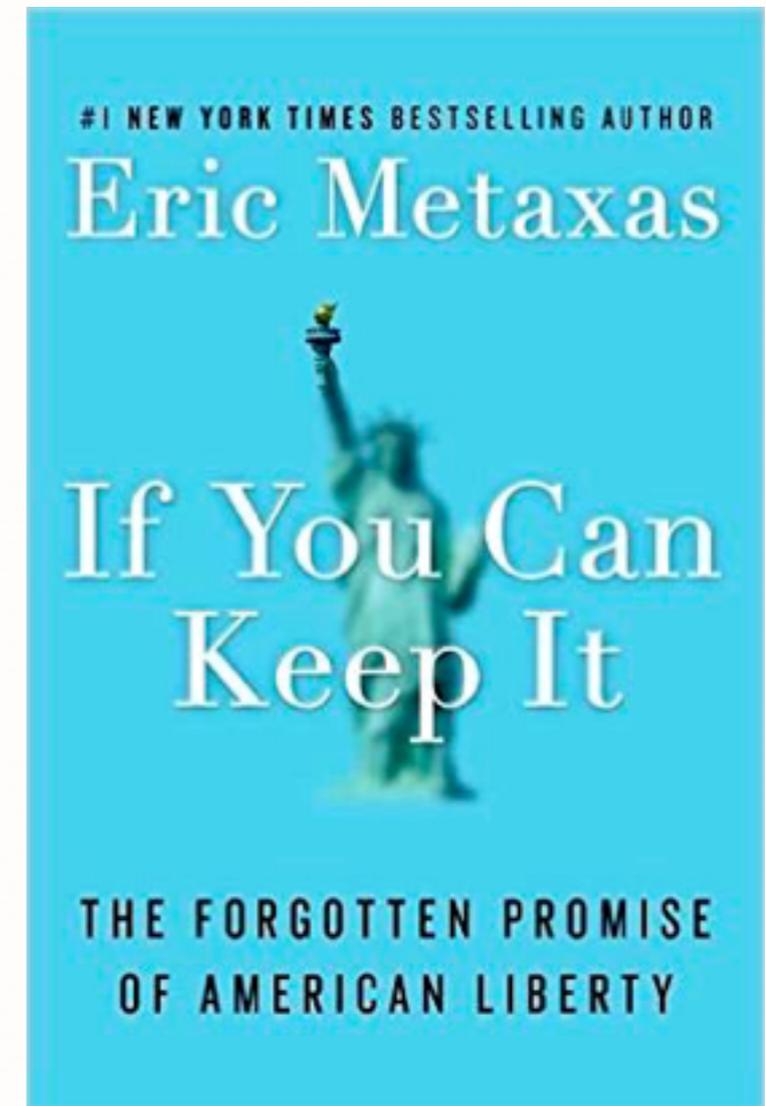


**IF YOU CAN
KEEP IT**

INTRODUCTION

- This book is part history, part manifesto about the founding of this country and what we need to do to keep it.
- He wrote it to include the idea of the “Golden Triangle of Freedom” that he heard about from Os Guinness.



THE IDEA OF AMERICA

THE PROMISE

- Benjamin Franklin emerged from Independence Hall after about 100 days in the summer of 1787.
- He along with George Washington, James Madison, Alexander Hamilton, Roger Sherman, and others drafted a 4,200 word document.
- Mrs. Powell asked him what they created. He replied, “A republic madam—if you can keep it.”

THE PROMISE

- Martin Luther King, Jr. in his famous “I Have a Dream” speech called the Declaration and the Constitution, a “promissory note to which every American was to fall heir.”
- It was a promise not instantly fulfilled not even fulfilled in his day.
- It is a promise that is to fulfilled by “we the people.”

THE PROMISE

- The Constitution was a pointer to something beyond itself. It is a promise that could be kept or broken.
- They were the heirs of the tradition of British law, going all the way back to the Magna Carta (1215).
- But the Constitution itself would do very little. It required the citizens to “keep the republic.”
- We are the keepers of the flame of liberty.

THE IDEA OF AMERICA

- America was a nation formed as an idea.
- Other countries were created from a group of ethnically similar people (Greece, Japan) or else by a strong leader (Alexander the Great, Rome).
- America was held together by an idea, and the citizens bought into that idea. That common idea was liberty. America was “conceived in liberty.”

THE IDEA OF AMERICA

- America was like a sunflower in a field of daisies.
- Today we are surrounded by other sunflowers and even some sunflower-daisy hybrids. But we must understand who unique America was at first.
- One element was the idea of “self-government.”
- The founders understood mankind was fallen, so they created checks and balances.

THE IDEA OF AMERICA

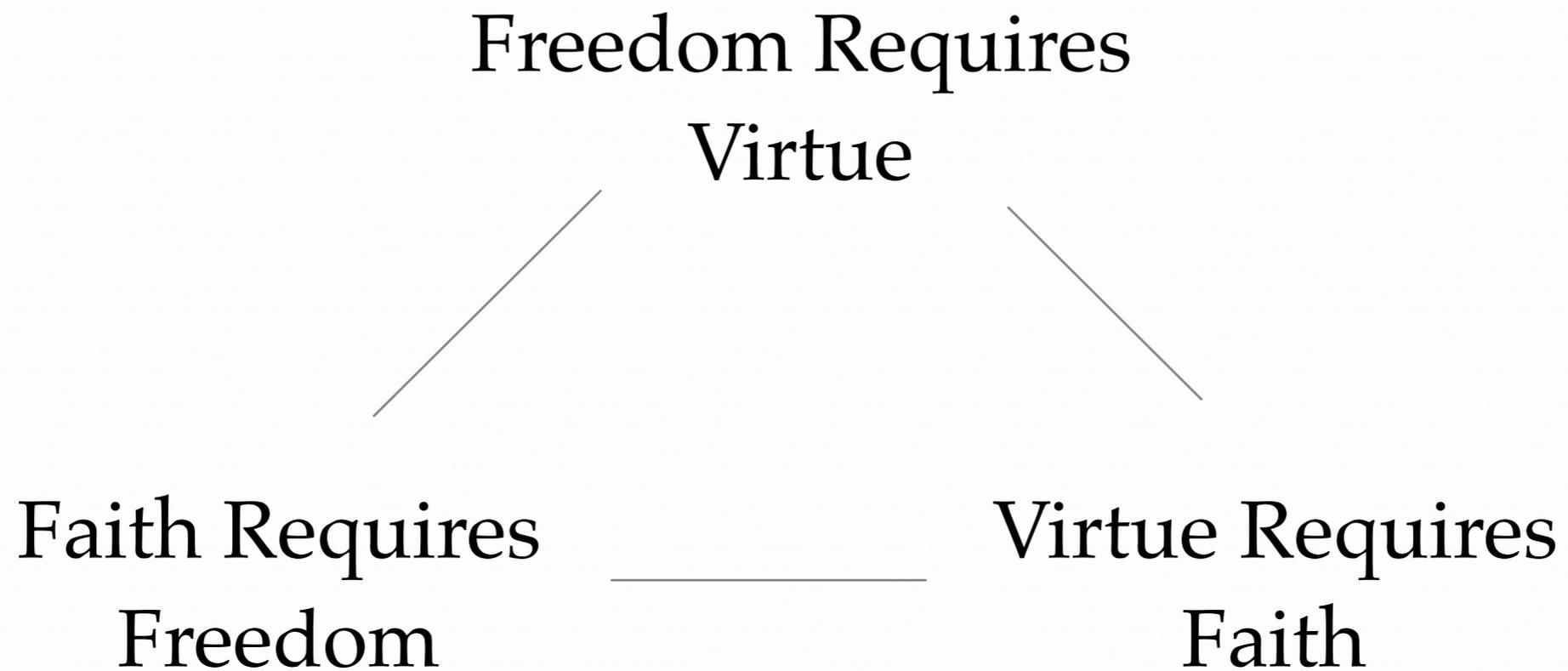
- The second part of that was to encourage each person to govern himself because of religion.
- They knew that religious people were less likely to misbehave.
- They also believed religion should not be coerced but be freely chosen. This became part of the “Golden Triangle of Freedom.”

GOLDEN TRIANGLE OF FREEDOM

INTRODUCTION

- When Eric Metaxas first heard Os Guinness talk about the “Golden Triangle of Freedom,” he was embarrassed that he had never heard of it.
- He soon found that others had never heard what the founders felt was the key to self-government.
- It is crucial that American understand where we came from and remember what it means to be an American.

INTRODUCTION



FREEDOM REQUIRES VIRTUE

- In the spring of 1787, Benjamin Franklin wrote a letter to two friends in France. He talked about the problems with the Articles of Confederation.
- “Only a virtuous people are capable of freedom.”
- This was a staggering statement from a man who was not a traditional, orthodox Christian.
- Why did he say this?

FREEDOM REQUIRES VIRTUE

- Even Alexis de Tocqueville understood this. He marveled at the American people and wrote about it in *Democracy in America*.
- His most famous quote, he actually never wrote (*if American ever ceases to be good, she will cease to be great*). But the idea is found in his writings.
- He did write this: “Liberty cannot be established without morality.”

VIRTUE REQUIRES FAITH

- If virtue is linked to freedom, then virtue is linked to faith and religion.
- John Adams: “We have no government armed with power of contending with human passions unbridled by morality and religion. . . . Our Constitution was made for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.”

VIRTUE REQUIRES FAITH

- Adams understood the secret to self-government was for the people to be self-governing.
- The founders believed that faith enabled a person to behave virtuously.
- George Washington said that “reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principles.”

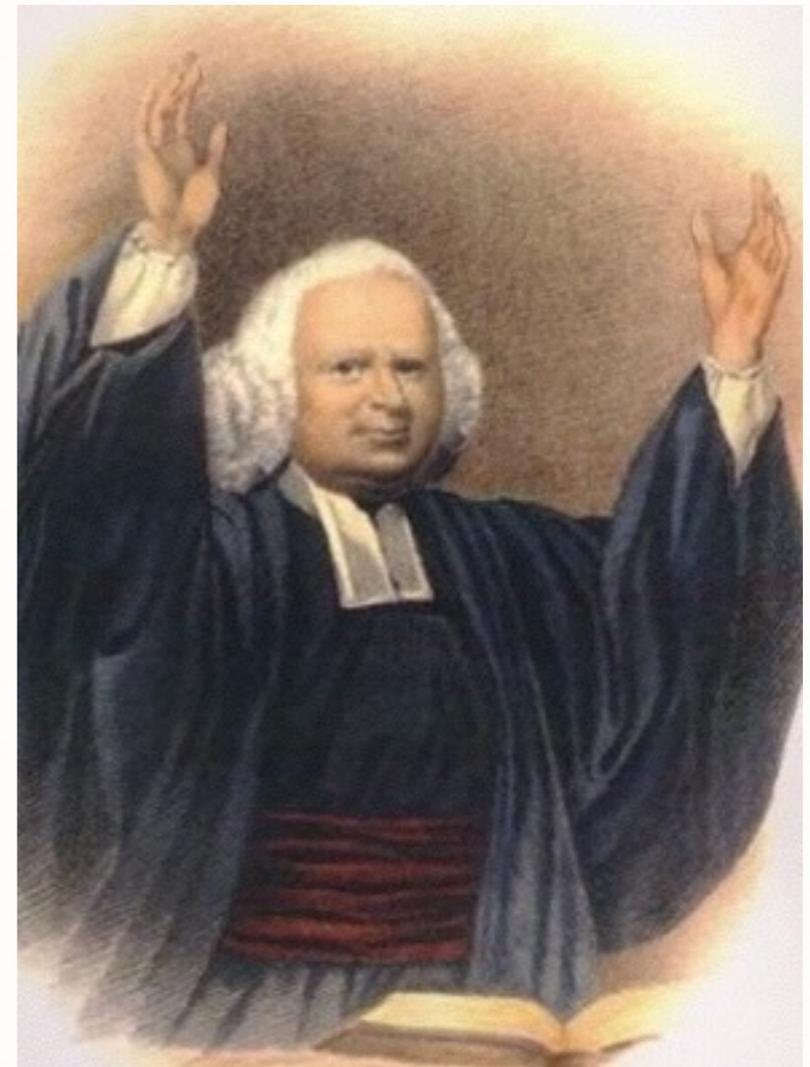
FAITH REQUIRES FREEDOM

- Tocqueville saw that religion and freedom were often enemies in France. But in America he found “they were intimately united.”
- Since the Pilgrims came to our shores in 1620, religious freedom and religious tolerance have been important factors in American life.
- Government was to be impartial towards religion and various denominations.

**AMERICAN LEADERS
AND HEROES**

GEORGE WHITEFIELD

- He was born of humble circumstances in England.
- He was a servitor at Oxford and met Charles and John Wesley - attend the Holy Club.
- He began to deny himself food and any pleasurable thing.



GEORGE WHITEFIELD

- When he was preaching to woman whose husband was a prisoner, he quoted John 3:16. Suddenly, she jumped up and said “I believe” and “I am saved.”
- He saw them change before his eyes. He began to understand that belief not behavior was the key.
- His first sermon after his ordination had such an impact on people (15 were supposedly driven mad), that he quickly became a celebrity in England.

GEORGE WHITEFIELD

- The Wesleys crossed the Atlantic to Georgia to ministers as missionaries to the Indians.
- Meanwhile George Whitefield began preaching at an astounding rate. By his death, he had preached 18,000 sermons and 12,000 talks and exhortations.
- He traveled to Georgia preaching twice a day and four times on Sundays. Then returned to England and faced opposition because of his dynamic style.

GEORGE WHITEFIELD

- While preaching in a church in South London, he was disturbed that only so many could be crammed inside, with a thousand outside trying to listen through the windows.
- That is when he decided to begin open air crusades so that more would hear about the “new birth.”
- By the time he returned to America, his arrival in Philadelphia was greeted with great enthusiasm.

GEORGE WHITEFIELD

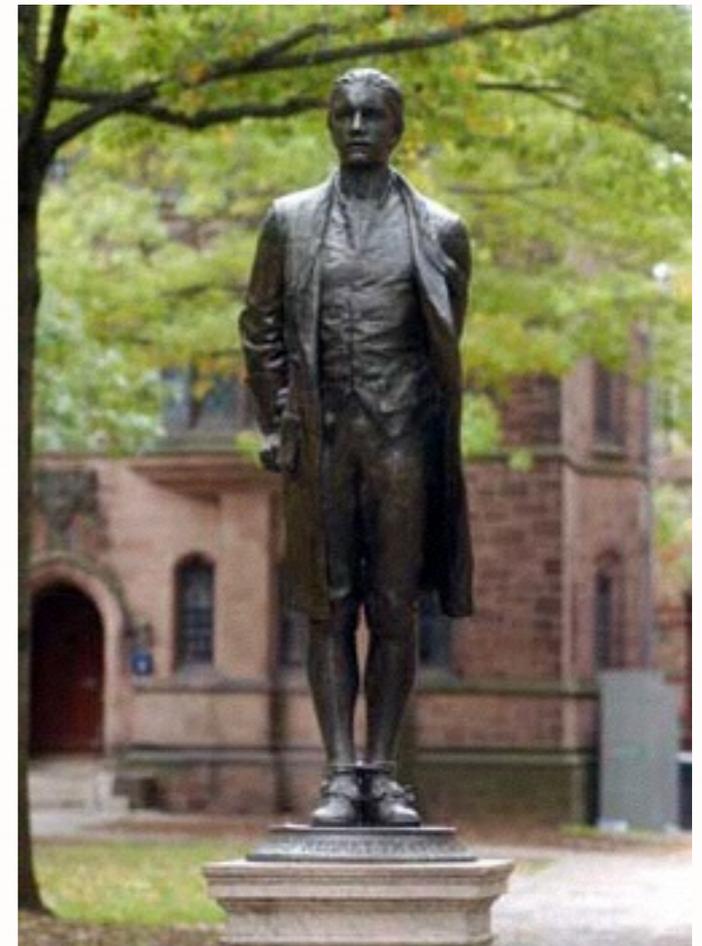
- The First Great Awakening began with Jonathan Edwards, and now George Whitefield fanned the flames of revival. At least 80 percent of all the colonists heard him preach by the time he died.
- The American colonists became more religious and therefore more capable and inclined toward this idea of self-government.
- His preaching also promoted the idea of liberty.

GEORGE WHITEFIELD

- There was also an egalitarian strain to the preaching that extended to women and blacks. Many female preachers developed during the Great Awakening, and many African-American preachers developed.
- Some historians have called George Whitefield the spiritual founding father of the United States.
- Some in England called him “the apostle of the English empire.”

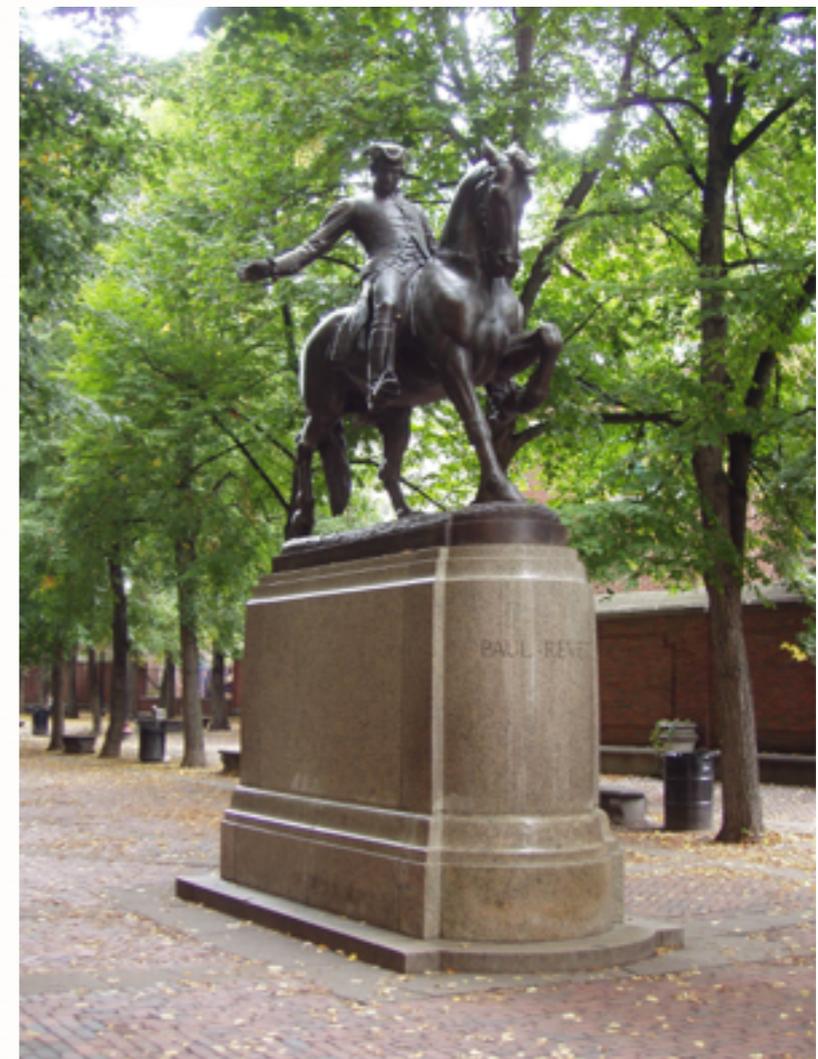
NATHAN HALE

- This statue of Nathan Hale is on the Yale University campus so that students would know of the heroic sacrifices made for them.
- At his hanging by the British, he is recorded to have said: “My only regret is that I have but one life to give for my country.”



PAUL REVERE

- This statue of Paul Revere in Boston is near his home and North Church.
- Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's poem - "Listen my children and you shall hear, of the midnight ride of Paul Revere."



PAUL REVERE

- His ride took place at the dawn of the American Revolution, just hours before the battles of Lexington and Concord.
- By now America was attuned to the ideas of liberty and self-government - tensions were much higher.
- The British wanted to confiscate the weapons and ammunition of the "Sons of Liberty." They also wanted to arrest John Hancock and Samuel Adams.

PAUL REVERE

- Paul Revere crossed Boston Harbor to Charleston and waited to see if there was one lantern (British riding by land) or two (British crossing the river).
- He and William Dawes departed separately, in case one was caught, the other could get through.
- Later that evening Dr. Samuel Prescott joined them. They were stopped by a British patrol, but the other two escaped.

KEY PRINCIPLES

MORAL LEADERS

- If self-governing people must possess virtue, and if they encourage virtue by remembering heroes stories and venerating heroes, what about the character of their leaders?
- Character is one quality among many, but an important quality (Nixon, Carter, Clinton).
- French philosopher Montesquieu - “bad examples can be worse than crimes.”

MORAL LEADERS

- Self-government cannot exist without virtuous leaders. Leaders are inevitably representatives of the larger order of things.
- Corruption in leaders gives citizens the sense that they are not all in it together. It becomes us vs. them.
- One of the most fragile parts of our fragile system of ordered liberties is the necessity of a basic trust between the people and their leaders.

ALMOST CHOSEN PEOPLE

- In many ways, this book is about what is called “American exceptionalism.”
- Alexis de Tocqueville coined the term in his book.
- G.K. Chesterton once said that “America is the only nation that is founded on a creed.”
- Ideals: all are created equal and free, we must hold our leaders accountable, no one is above the law.

ALMOST CHOSEN PEOPLE

- John Winthrop, governor of the new Massachusetts Bay Colony delivered a sermon (*A Model of Christian Charity*) that talked about a “city upon a hill.”
- John Kennedy repeated that call: “we shall be as a city upon a hill—the eyes of all people are one us.”
- He concluded by quoting from the Gospel of Luke: “Of them to whom much is given, much will be required.”

ALMOST CHOSEN PEOPLE

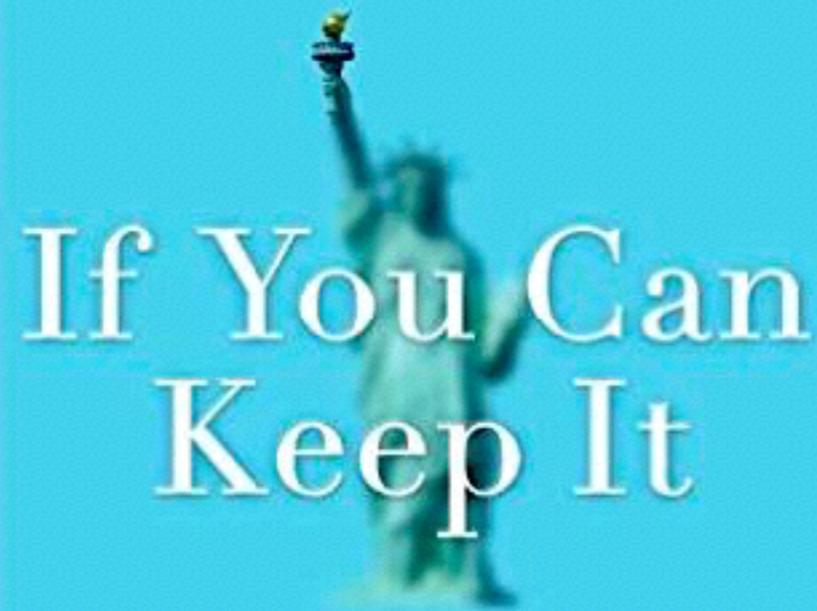
- Ronald Reagan in his final words to the nation said:
- “I’ve spoken of the shining city all my political life, but I don’t know if I ever quite communicated what I saw when I said it. But in my mind it was a tall proud city built on rocks stronger than oceans, wind-swept, God-blessed, and teeming with people of all kinds living in harmony and peace, a city with free ports that hummed with commerce and creativity.”

LOVING AMERICA

- How can we love a country we now know to be guilty of so many things? Ronald Reagan once said, “If we forget what we did, we won’t know who we are.”
- On the other hand, our love and pride of America should not veer into jingoism or nationalism.
- We have been given a republic, the true question is whether we do what is necessary to keep it.

#1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR

Eric Metaxas



If You Can
Keep It

THE FORGOTTEN PROMISE
OF AMERICAN LIBERTY