

## Memorial Day and a Christian's Responsibility

Memorial Day celebration, a time when as a nation we remember those men and women who gave so much that we might have and keep our freedom. In addition to being called Memorial Day it has been called "Decoration Day" because of the practice of decorating the graves of fallen soldiers with flags and flowers. In 1868 Gen. John A. Logan, then commander-in-chief of the Grand Army of the Republic, issued an order, naming May 30 as a day "*for the purpose of strewing with flowers or otherwise decorating the graves of comrades who died in defense of their country.*" He signed the order "with the hope that it will be kept up from year to year." In 1873 New York became the first state to officially recognize May 30<sup>th</sup> as a day of remembrance for our fallen soldiers.

In 1967 Memorial Day became an official federal holiday and in 1971 it fell under the National Holiday Act that moved several holidays to a Monday, thus creating 3-day weekends. Many veteran organizations have lobbied since then to have it returned to May 30<sup>th</sup> so as to give our service men and women a special day of honor and hopefully avoid the ever growing influence to make this the holiday to kick off NASCAR and the summer rather than rightfully remembering those who gave everything to secure our freedom.

I love America but I am not sure that I love what it is ever so quickly becoming. I love the freedom we have until that freedom becomes a license to sin. Read Proverbs 14:34 and Psalm 33:12. As a Christian looking at a nation that legalizes what God calls sin, that is committed to a quick fix tax relief by expanding gambling, that makes it easy to purchase alcoholic beverages, and allows women to kill unborn in the name of their right to do with their body as they choose, one wonders if the promise of God to bless this nation can still be in effect. But just complaining about it does not really help. There are three commands in Scripture that, if taken seriously, could make a difference in our country.

**1. We are challenged in the Bible to *pray for those in authority over us.* Read I Timothy 2:1-4.**

With all of our personal needs and those of our family we often fail to have time to add to our list the names of those in authority over us. It is easier to pray for a politician with whom we agree when he is facing a major decision but that is not what Paul was saying to Timothy. Paul was challenging Timothy, and those in the church he was the pastor of, to pray for the Roman authorities that were among the most corrupt and immoral history has ever known, officials that were consistently persecuting them. God's advice through Paul was not to just preach against sins but to pray for those in authority over us. I often hear church people say we desperately need in our nation a spiritual revival.

Christians often express the belief that what we desperately needs spiritual revival in our nation. Every single revival, that we know anything about the background of, began with a handful of people praying for those in leadership over them and for God to move in a mighty way. I do not believe anything will happen in America until Christians earnestly and consistently pray for

revival and for those in authority over them. There will be no revival in America, no change in the downward trend of the spiritual tone of our society until we learn to pray to pray earnestly and consistently for those in leadership on a local, state and national level.

2. Jesus had an encounter with the Pharisees over their responsibility to Rome as recorded in Mark 12:13-17. They presented Jesus with a coin and asked if it was right to pay taxes and Jesus responded that **we are to give to Caesar what is his and to God what is His.** The context was taxes but certainly the answer was far broader than that. Jesus was telling those whose true citizenship is in heaven that they also live for now here on earth and as such have a responsibility to the government and the nation that we are a part of. Too often Christians have sung, *"This world is not my home, I'm just a passing through"* and proceeded to live as if they were therefore in no way responsible for this world. How sad it is when Christians forget that they are the salt of the earth and as such are to serve to add spice to life around them and preserve those aspects of our society which are wholesome. If we are not contributing to the betterment of our community in some way, we are failing in our responsibility as a Christian. We must render to America that which belongs to America while always being faithful to the God who has called us unto Himself.

Remember there is a difference between being a good citizen and being a good citizen for God. Paul tells us in I Corinthians 10:31, **"So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God."** We volunteer and serve in our community because God has told us that when we give even a cup of water in His name, we do it unto Him. In areas where we can volunteer, we can show God's love for the people who live in our community.

Whenever we can we must openly share our faith in Jesus. There are times when we cannot, in a diverse society, openly talk of Jesus, but if we are doing that which is right, doing it as fully as we can and rejoicing as we do it, people will want to know what makes us tick. We can then tell them it is because our faith inspires us to live differently and to love in a different way. We can share that we are glad to do it, not for rewards or recognition but for God's glory. People may argue with our theology, but they find it hard to argue with our life when it is consistent with that which we profess.

3. Read Matthew 5:14-16. **"You are the light of the world."** That is reflected in how we serve our community but in a deeper sense it is a call to be living witnesses in our community to the truth of who God is, what He did for us in Jesus, and what a personal commitment to Jesus can mean both here and now and in eternity.

We not only cannot legislate morality, America seems unwilling to even consider it. While we could pass legislation that makes it difficult to sin or makes one pay for sin, it is only the changed life that happens when one meets the true and living Jesus in a personal saving way that can bring about the moral change we need in America. This is the only true way to transform a community.

The majority of the problems we face in our nation today are moral problems and if a change in a life is to occur, we must introduce an individual to the true and living Jesus. There is nothing we can ever do for our country that is more meaningful than to lead an individual to Jesus. Once one's sin has been washed clean through the provision Jesus made on the Cross, fellowship with God is restored and genuine transformation can begin. The transformation that comes with a personal commitment to Jesus enables one to be the kind of citizen here and now that God wants us to be.

We need an army of God's people who will go into society armed not with guns but with love and compassion and committed to making a difference in lives by the things they do for His glory. America needs an army of believers who love God so much and are so excited about what He has done for them in Jesus that, that they, in the words of Peter given in Acts 4:20, "**cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.**" We need an army of God's people who will be as disciplined and a regular army, as serious about their responsibility before God for their country as those who fight in a regular army, and willing to give even their last full measure if need be to bring Jesus to America.

America is the most powerful country on earth, but it is not powerful enough to escape the judgment of God for its sins and it is not powerful enough to stand long in a moral vacuum. If you love America, recommit yourself to be the Christian God wants you to be in the society He has placed you in. Recommit yourself to prayer for America. Recommit yourself to giving back to society that which belongs to society. Most of all recommit yourself to sharing the good news of life in Jesus, life that alone makes living in this country or any country exciting and meaningful.