

Remembering the price of freedom

Dan Nelson – pastor

Calvary Chapel of the Ojai Valley

There are times when we, as a culture, forego everything to observe landmarks in our lives. When Shelley and I got married, almost everything else that would normally have been priorities in daily living took a backseat to the life event that was taking place.

When each one of our four children was born, the same thing occurred. No matter what was on my schedule or what bills needed to be paid, it was all canceled so I could focus on the day. Christmas, Easter, Thanksgiving, and the Fourth of July have always been that way to me as well. Even during tense times of exams or deadlines, school or work was suspended and the daily routine was altered in order to get together with family to feast and celebrate. And when someone I love dies, I stop everything to remember and commemorate their life at a memorial service.

I personally feel grateful for so many benefits in my life and it seems perfectly appropriate that I would interrupt all of the busyness once in a while and reflect on that. We are called to have an attitude of gratitude every day, however, there are times when we halt our superfluous activities to consider specific gifts in our lives that may otherwise go unnoticed or unappreciated. Memorial Day is one of those occasions. It is at this time that we count our blessings for the many sacrifices that were made in handing to us the freedoms that we enjoy every day here in the United States of America. I am among those who believe this is the greatest country on the planet. While imperfect, there is no place else on Earth where there exists such a wonderful combination of beauty and opportunity. I count both as a present from God.

In this country people have the possibility to pursue education, career, commerce, home and land ownership, while exercising freedoms of speech, press, travel, and worship. Further, most of us are not mere residents, but citizens, which brings even added privileges as well as responsibilities. From many parts of the globe, it is the lifelong dream of millions to come to the United States to experience its many benefits.

And yet, wouldn't you agree that it is foolish to blindly believe that these wonderful freedoms have come by accident? Many men and women have made the ultimate sacrifice to bring them to us. God has been gracious and people have been willing to battle for their conviction to live free.

I thank every person, past, present and future, who make these critical sacrifices for the benefit of us all. We are in their debt.

Many of these principles of individual sovereignty, personal liberty, independence to pursue peace and happiness, freedom to own land and to worship, are principles that were

acquired from the Bible. The Scriptures tell of mankind enslaved to sin, and not truly self-determining. But God's heart is to liberate his people who he made in his image. The passages speak of men and women doing the very things that lead to their own demise, and the need for a radical offering to enable release from bondage. Jesus made that sacrifice. As our American freedoms did not arrive by accident nor were they simply conferred upon us by our foes, so spiritual freedom does not come by chance, neither is it merely granted to us by our enemy. A sacrifice was made to set humanity free from sin and its ultimate consequences; that offering was Jesus Christ. Jesus said, "The truth shall make you free ... and if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed" (John 8:32, 26).

This past Monday, we got out the barbecue and charbroiled burgers and hot dogs. But did we stop to consider what has been given? Was it a true "memorial day"? We need to remember the sacrifices, consider the people, appreciate the freedoms, and be grateful for the blessings. In this way, we honor those who brought them to us. To me, this is what Memorial Day is all about. And let's not neglect to reflect upon Jesus, the sacrifice he made and the liberty he brings to us; let us receive them, and live them." Stand fast in the freedom where Christ has made us free and not to be entangled again in the yoke of bondage" (Galatians 5:1).

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Dan Nelson is a frequent contributor to the Ojai Valley News and currently serves the Ojai Valley Ministerial Association and community as editor of the Religion Column. Permission is freely granted to reprint the article in its entirety. Dan Nelson is pastor of Calvary Chapel Christian Church of the Ojai Valley.



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Sunday Worship:

9:00 & 10:45am
Calvary Chapel Ojai Valley
195 Mahoney Ave., Oak View

Mid-Week Study:

7:00pm Thursday
Calvary Chapel Ojai Valley
195 Mahoney Ave., Oak View