**TAKING A KNEE**

My dad served in the United States Navy during World War 2. He was stationed on the newly commissioned *USS Franklin Delano Roosevelt*, an aircraft carrier destined to fight in the Pacific theatre. Therefore I grew up in the home of a veteran where we were expected to honor our country and salute the flag.

In school we began each day with the Lord’s prayer and standing at attention with our right hand over our heart as we said the pledge of allegiance to the flag. Often the national anthem – *The* *Star-Spangled Banner* – was played over the intercom and we were expected to learn the words and sing along. As I played several sports throughout my school years we always began each game with the national anthem. After each game we would gather around the coach and all hold hands as we kneeled and said a prayer, thanking God for His blessings, for good sportsmanship, and for protecting us with health during the contest.

In 2001, after the 9-11 attack on our country that resulted in over 3000 deaths, America came together in a spirit of unity like had not been true since World War 2. Before sporting events, concerts, and other venues there was a patriotism that seemed to make us as one people. Not only was the flag honored, but the national anthem was sung with tears, and followed by the very emotional rendition of *God Bless America*. It was cool to be a patriot. Kneeling was a symbol of respect.

That was then. This is now. The headlines on most newscasts, through the print media, and over the radio, is the promotion of the idea to “take a knee” when the flag is flown and when the national anthem is played. To “take a knee” is to make a statement that our flag, and our national anthem, is unworthy of respect and is a symbol of oppression and injustice. As a citizen, a patriot, and the son of a veteran who fought to secure our freedoms, that saddens me beyond words.

The Preamble to the Constitution reads: "**W**e the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America."

The phrase, “in order to form a more perfect union” means the founders knew it was imperfect, and would forever be imperfect, for it is occupied and governed by imperfect people. Only God is perfect, and only His Constitution -Bible- is perfect (2 Tim. 3:16).

The phrase “establish justice” is exemplified on the Supreme Court building, and most courthouses throughout the nation, with the symbol of a blindfolded Lady Justice with a balance scale in hand, administering an impartial verdict. While that has obviously not been true in every case, it is an ideal for which our judicial system strives. Only Christ, at the Judgment, will establish “liberty and justice for all” (words from our pledge of allegiance). Only in God’s judicial system can be found this: *“For I proclaim the name of the LORD: Ascribe greatness to our God. He is the Rock, His work is perfect; For all His ways are justice, A God of truth and without injustice; Righteous and upright is He”* (Deut. 32:3-4).

If you’ve read this article to this point you will likely think I’m merely registering an opinion as an American citizen. My actual intention is to speak as a gospel preacher using this relevant example of “taking a knee” to make a spiritual application that all of us should soberly and seriously consider.

Isaiah, by inspired revelation, called on an idolatrous Israel to “take a knee” to Him. *“Look to Me, and be saved, all you ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other. I have sworn by Myself; The word has gone out of My mouth in righteousness,
and shall not return, that to Me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall take an oath”* (Isaiah 45:22-23).

Paul used that same quote when he appealed to the divided Roman Christians to put aside their differences of opinion and personal judgments in order to bring unity to the church. He said in Romans 14:10-12,

*“For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written: “As I live, says the LORD, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God.”
So then each of us shall give account of himself to God.”*

Think about what Paul is exhorting them, and us, to always remember. While we always have a diversity of opinions among us in every local congregation, we must never, never, never forget that one day “*we shall ALL* ***stand***” before the Judgment Seat of Christ, followed by “*every* ***knee shall bow***” to Him as our Judge. We will both stand in respect (as the judge enters the courtroom the sergeant at arms says, “All Rise”), then after our case is heard and He prepares to render a verdict we “bow the knee” in respect to His perfect judgment. No one on that day will doubt that justice was served. All the world’s injustices are made right. Yes, including His own…

At His own earthly trial Pontius Pilate declared Jesus to be innocent at least five times. And yet he cowardly turned Him over to the soldiers to mock Him for claiming to be a king. They twisted a crown of thorns to ram on His head, mocked Him with a royal purple robe, gave a half-hearted salute “Hail, king of the Jews!” then took His scepter (a reed) and beat Him with it, while spitting in His face. They topped it off by “*bowing the knee*” to worship Him (Mark 15:16-19). We cringe as we think those same soldiers will one day “*bow the knee*” in holy terror as He judges them for eternity.

While it’s one thing to “take a knee” in a symbolic gesture to a national flag or anthem, it is a sure thing we will all “take a knee” one day in either reverence or fear. We do so in reverence if we do it now, or in fear if we procrastinate till death. Please listen to this:

*“Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus* ***every knee should bow****, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father”* (Philippians 2:9-11).

Until next time … I beg you to respectively “take a knee” before Jesus as Lord and King.

I love you. Rick