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MEMORIAL DAY – REMEMBRANCE

Today we observe Memorial Day, the American holiday in remembrance of our military personnel who died fighting for our country. In fact, it was originally called Remembrance Day when it was established in 1868 in the aftermath of the War Between the States, commonly called the Civil War. More soldiers died in that war 1861-1865 including both my paternal and maternal great-great-grandfathers, than in both world Wars, Viet Nam, and the Gulf war combined,

The holiday was established to be observed on May 30th of each year. It remained May 30 for 103 years (1868-1970) until labor unions successfully lobbied congress to change it to the last Monday of May so as to get their union workers a three-day “long” weekend.

When I was a teenager, every Memorial Day I looked forward to listening on my transistor radio to one of the biggest automobile races of the time, the Indianapolis 500. I could name most of the drivers. Since they changed the holiday, I have never since listened to it or watched it. Personally, I don't like that they changed a long-standing tradition for a selfish reason.

The main thing is that we give honor and respectful remembrance to our fallen ones. We also respect those who served including all who came home alive, some wounded and some not. My maternal grandfather served in the Navy in the early 1900's. My father served in the Army in WWII and came home a wounded veteran. My brother and I both served in the Navy. Service to our nation was both a duty and an honor.

There is another kind of fallen veterans that it would be mindful to remember. These are the martyred “soldiers” of God's army. For nearly 2,000 years there have been many who sacrificed their lives to proclaim the gospel of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Would you be willing to lay down your life for the gospel of Jesus Christ? What if they tortured you mercilessly? Would you bear the torture without recanting your faith? They are about to kill you: would you deny your faith to save your life? Jesus didn't. He bore extreme torture and an excruciating death. Would that I be willing to do the same.

God welcomes his “fallen soldiers” into glory. They shall receive a special crown of life.