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THE FALLEN HEROES – LESSON 1

TRADITIONAL MEMORIAL DAY

Today is May 30th, Memorial Day, which traditionally started shortly following the end of the Civil War and celebrated on May 30th regardless of what day of the week it might be. We celebrated it when I was a child, as my dad's company took the day off and threw a picnic each year in the 1950's and 1960's. I would listen on radio to the big Indianapolis 500 race that was always held on May 30.

In 1971 the U.S. government yielded to pressure from labor unions to set some holidays, so as to create a three-day-paid holiday for all workers. This often meant changing a tradition to obtain a Monday holiday following Saturday and Sunday. That resulted in what is now called an "observed" holiday. This means tomorrow, May 31, will be the "observed" Memorial Day instead of observing the traditional day of May 30.

Laying that thought aside (and "off" my chest) it is a time to give deep reflection to those who were killed for a worthy cause. This national American holiday is to give attention to those who died in war, fighting for our country. It is an axiom that "freedom is not free." It comes at a cost. It has cost many tens of thousands their lives, starting from the American Revolution and continuing still today. Without their sacrifice for country, we might have spent many more years under the dominion of a foreign power.

In Washington, District of Columbia, we have military burial grounds and special memorials erected for those fallen in wartime. In October, we have Veteran's Day to commemorate all others who have also served yet lived. Many of those have also sacrificed their bodies through injury, loss of limb, or loss of mobility. Theirs is a living sacrifice.

Yes, this holiday, originally called "Decoration Day" started in approximately 1870. The Civil War was fought valiantly by soldiers who on both sides were fighting for the land where they lived. More American lives were lost in that war than in all other wars combined from that time. I lost both great-great grandfathers from both sides of my family (Sanders and Anderson) in that war, Thomas Jefferson Sanders, and Charles Anderson. Others have served and lived: Guy Anderson and Claude Sanders (early 1900's), my father James Sanders (wounded in World War II), myself, and my brother John (Viet Nam era).

I choose to give honor to a different category of "fallen heroes," the Christian Martyrs. Jesus gave His life for the worthiest of all causes, the redemption of Adam's fallen race.

Commencing tomorrow on the "observed" Memorial Day, we shall "memorialize" the fallen "soldiers of the Cross" who gave their lives for Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of Heaven. They are those who "gave all" that we might have freedom today from the "foreign power" of Satan who opposes the "land of the free in Christ."