INTRODUCTION

Webster defines a MEMORIAL as, “anything meant to help people remember some person or event, such as a monument or holiday.

Tomorrow we will observe Memorial Day, a legal holiday set aside in memory of all the American servicemen and women who paid the ultimate sacrifice for our freedom.

In the Book of II SAMUEL, chapter 23, we find a scriptural Memorial to some of the bravest soldiers who ever lived. The scripture refers to them as DAVID’S MIGHTY MEN.

There were 37 of them in all. But the scriptures focus special attention on SEVEN of these soldiers who were part of an ELITE SPECIAL OPS FORCE like our modern day Green Berets or Navy Seals.

Because this passage is somewhat difficult to understand in some places, I would like to read this text from THE AMPLIFIED VERSION to give greater clarity. So I would ask you to just listen:

(Text on the Next Page)
2 Samuel 23:8-21 (Amplified Bible)

8 These are the names of the mighty men whom David had: Josheb-basshebeth, a Tahchemonite, chief of the Three [heroes], known also as Adino the Eznite; he wielded his spear and went against 800 men, who were slain at one time.

9 Next to him among the three mighty men was Eleazar son of Dodo, son of Ahohi. He was with David when they defied the Philistines assembled there for battle, and the men of Israel had departed.

10 Eleazar arose and struck down the Philistines until his hand was weary and froze to his sword. The Lord wrought a great deliverance and victory that day; the men returned after him only to take the spoil.

11 Next to [Eleazar] was Shammah son of Agee the Hararite. The Philistines were gathered at Lehi on a piece of ground full of lentils; and the Israelites fled from the Philistines.

12 But he stood in the midst of the ground and defended it and slew the Philistines; and the Lord wrought a great victory.

13 And three of the thirty chief men went down at harvest time to David in the cave of Adullam, and a troop of Philistines was encamped in the Valley of Rephaim.

14 And David was then in the stronghold, and the garrison of the Philistines was then in Bethlehem.

15 And David said longingly, Oh, that someone would give me a drink of water from the well of Bethlehem by the gate!

16 And the three mighty men broke through the army of the Philistines and drew water out of the well of Bethlehem by the gate and brought it to David. But he would not drink it, but poured it out to the Lord.

17 And he said, Be it far from me, O Lord, to drink this. Is it not [the same as] the blood of the men who went at the risk of their lives? So he would not drink it. These things did the three mighty men.
18 Now Abishai the brother of Joab son of Zeruiah was chief of the Three. He wielded his spear against 300 men and slew them, and won a name beside the Three.

19 Was he not most renowned of the Three? So he was their captain; however, he did not attain to the Three.

20 And Benaiah son of Jehoiada, a valiant man of Kabzeel, who had done many notable acts, slew two lion-like men of Moab. He went down also and slew a lion in a pit on a snowy day.

21 And he slew an Egyptian, a handsome man. The Egyptian had a spear in his hand, but Benaiah went down to him with a staff, snatched the spear out of the Egyptian's hand, and slew the man with his own spear.

Verses 24 -39 of II Samuel 23, goes on to list 30 more soldiers who were part of David’s Mighty Fighting Men.

All of these soldiers were men of great valor and courage who never ran from an enemy even though at times they were greatly outnumbered. And God used these Mighty Men of David to pull off some incredible victories on the battlefield.

Israel owed a tremendous debt of gratitude to these MIGHTY FIGHTING MEN who were willing to lay down their own lives to protect the freedom of the Israelite people.

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We who are AMERICANS owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to the MIGHTY FIGHTING MEN AND WOMEN who were willing to lay down their own lives for our freedom.
This Memorial Day, may we first of all............

I. Remember Those Who Sacrificed

1. PANEL 48 W, LINE 26. That is where you will find the name of Private First Class, Dennis Wayne Heffner, on the Viet Nam Memorial Wall.

   Denny Heffner was from my home Church in Indiana. He arrived in Viet Nam on July 30, 1968. Just seventeen days later his lost his life, when a Viet Cong soldier threw a live grenade into Denny’s tent and Denny threw his body on the grenade the save the lives of the other five soldiers in his tent.

   Jesus said, “Greater love has no man than this, than to lay down his life for his friends.”

2. JOEL TAYLOR attended Wilkinson Church of Christ regularly when I was minister. In fact Joel worked in our sound room recording our services for both TV and radio.

   While a student at Northside High School, Joel was a member of the ROTC. After graduation he enlisted in the United States Army and was deployed to Iraq.

   On June 24, 2008, Joel and two fellow American soldiers were gravely wounded when the vehicle they were riding in encountered an Improvised Exploding Device in Mosul, Iraq. Joel died the next day. He was only 20 years old.

   JOEL TAYLOR is buried in a small family cemetery just 8 miles from my house. And every time I drive by that little cemetery, I REMEMBER.......I REMEMBER.
3. AMERICAN REVOLUTIONARY WAR-----25,000 DEAD.
   WAR OF 1812------20,000 DEAD
   MEXICAN AMERICAN WAR-----13,283 DEAD
   CIVIL WAR------625,000 DEAD
   WORLD WAR I------204,002 DEAD
   WORLD WAR II-----670,846 DEAD
   KOREAN WAR------92,134 DEAD
   VIET NAM WAR------153,303 DEAD
   THE BEIRUT CONFLICT------169 DEAD
   THE GULF WAR------849 DEAD
   THE WAR IN AFGHANISTAN------6,038 DEAD and rising.
   THE WAR IN IRAQ------31,827 DEAD and rising.

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FREEDOM ISN'T FREE

I watched the flag pass by one day.
It fluttered in the breeze.
A young Marine saluted it,
And then he stood at ease.
I looked at him in uniform
So young, so tall, so proud,
With hair cut square and eyes alert
He'd stand out in any crowd.
I thought how many men like him
Had fallen through the years.
How many died on foreign soil?
How many mothers' tears?
How many pilots' planes shot down?
How many died at sea?
How many foxholes were soldiers' graves?
No, freedom isn't free.

(2\textsuperscript{nd} stanza of poem is on next page)
I heard the sound of taps one night,
When everything was still
I listened to the bugler play
And felt a sudden chill.
I wondered just how many times
That taps had meant "Amen,"
When a flag had draped a coffin
Of a brother or a friend.
I thought of all the children,
Of the mothers and the wives,
Of fathers, sons and husbands
With interrupted lives.
I thought about a graveyard
At the bottom of the sea
Of unmarked graves in Arlington.
No, freedom isn't free.

4. This Memorial Day as we have our family picnics and cookouts.....
   as we celebrate the unofficial beginning of summer......may we
   pause to REMEMBER THOSE WHO SACRIFICED their lives
   to give us this freedom.

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But may we also........

II. Remember Those Who Served

1. How many of you here this evening served our country in
   the military?

   (Let’s show our gratitude to these men with our applause)

All of them were blessed to come home alive. But yet each of them were scarred from the nightmarish images of war that were branded in their memories. In fact none of them was ever able to talk about their war experiences.

3. You see, even for those who SERVE AND SURVIVE, war exacts a heavy emotional toll that remains forever buried in the memory of our veterans for the rest of their earthly lives.

4. Illustration: Many of you can probably remember FRED ROGERS who hosted the Children’s TV Show, “Mr. Roger’s Neighborhood.”

   With his quiet, peaceful demeanor, one would hardly suspect that Fred Rogers was a U.S. Navy Seal…… a combat-proven Viet Nam Veteran with over 25 enemy kills to his name.

   Fred Rogers was a master in small arms and hand-to-hand combat, able to disable or kill an enemy in a heartbeat.

   On his TV show, Mr. Rogers always wore a sweater, not because he was cold, but to cover up the numerous tattoos on his forearm and biceps.

   When Fred Rogers returned home from Viet Nam he became an ordained Presbyterian Minister, who dedicated the rest of his life to leading children down the right path.

   FRED ROGERS WAS A TRUE AMERICAN HERO!
5. This Memorial Day REMEMBER THOSE WHO SERVED.
   If you know a living war veteran, why not send them a
   Thank You card this week?

   Remember Those Who Sacrificed
   Remember Those Who Served

   And finally……

III. Remember The Savior

   I CORINTHIANS 15:54b-57

   54b Death has been swallowed up in victory.

   55 Where, O death, is your victory?
   Where, O death, is your sting?

   56 The sting of death this sin, and the power of sin is the
   law.

   57 But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through
   our Lord Jesus Christ.

1. The greatest battlefield of all time was not at Gettysburg
   …….or Vicksburg…..or Iwa Jima……..the greatest battlefield
   of all time was on Calvary’s Hill.

   -It was on Calvary’s Hill……..Heaven and Hell…….
   Good and Evil……..Light and Darkness clashed in the
   battle of the ages.

   -It was on Calvary’s Hill, Jesus Christ, the only begotten
   Son of God defeated Satan with both hands nailed to a
   cross.
2. It was on Calvary’s Hill the GREATEST FREEDOM of all was won……..OUR ETERNAL FREEDOM that gave us the victory over SIN…….victory over SATAN……and victory over the GRAVE!

STATUE OF LIBERTY

In New York harbor, stands a lady,
With a torch raised to the sky,
And all who see her, know she stands for,
Liberty for you and I.

I’m so proud to be called an American,
To be named with the brave and the free.
I will honor our flag and our trust in God,
And the Statue of Liberty.

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On lonely Golgotha, stood a cross,
With our Lord raised to the sky,
And all who kneel there, live forever,
As all the saved can testify.

I’m so glad to be called a Christian,
To be named with the ransomed and whole,
As the statue liberates the citizen,
So the cross liberates the soul.

CONCLUSION

This Memorial Day may we REMEMBER THOSE WHO SACRIFICED. May we REMEMBER THOSE WHO SERVED……..And most importantly, May we REMEMBER THE SAVIOR not just on Memorial Day, but each and every day.