**Stones and Memorials**

***19****The people came up out of the Jordan on the tenth day of the first month, and they encamped at Gilgal on the east border of Jericho.****20****And those twelve stones, which they took out of the Jordan, Joshua set up at Gilgal.****21****And he said to the people of Israel, “When your children ask their fathers in times to come, ‘What do these stones mean?’****22****then you shall let your children know, ‘Israel passed over this Jordan on dry ground.’****23****For the Lord your God dried up the waters of the Jordan for you until you passed over, as the Lord your God did to the Red Sea, which he dried up for us until we passed over,****24****so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of the Lord is mighty, that you may fear the Lord your God forever.” (Joshua 4:19-24)*

 More than the deeds of people, the memorials of life are an invitation to praise the Lord.

 Greetings to you dear brothers and sisters in Christ as we commemorate today our military martyrs and their many feats. In truth, it is important to remember that their sacrifices would not have been possible were it not for God’s blessing upon this country – something which caused their battles to be for genuine freedom both within and without this country. Today we’re going to take a look at the book of Joshua, in which we find an important principle about our spiritual life. When opportunities arise for commemorations and memorials, it is important to establish just who or what needs to be honored. That’s why I say that the memorials of life are an invitation to praise the Lord (more than the deeds of people). Let’s go deeper for a few moments:

 Memorials and memorial stones create an opportunity for us to bear witness to what God has done. In the passage above, the Israelites experienced a great miracle when they reached the edge of the desert. They crossed the Jordan River, but on dry ground, because God had stopped the flow of the water and opened the way for his people. Their entrance into the Promised Land was entirely His doing. In order to get the people to remember His work, however, God instructed that each tribe take a stone from the river and place it at their first stopover (in the vicinity of Jericho). The stones would become objects of curiosity for the children and youth of the coming generations. They (the parents) were not supposed to say that the stones were signs of their own success, but rather that the Lord went ahead of them and dried up the Jordan River for them to advance into the land. Those memorial stones were supposed to be a reason to spark conversation about the Lord by the parents and grandparents.

 The above is similar to when we tell genocide stories or tales of hardships from our past to our children and grandchildren. May those conversations be opportunities for us to ascribe to the Lord every success, every conquest, every important victory that we have experienced.

 Today, we find ourselves in a country where its military martyrs are commemorated. If only people did not memorialize the military service of those who died, but also the blessings given by God to this country, which they defended so bravely. Why? It is because the founding of this nation (the United States of America), the verses of the Bible, its images and truths are found in countless early writings, plastered and carved in the walls of our government buildings, and even upon our founding writings. In other words, the Word of God in its manifestation of Truth, was greatly, if not completely respected and lifted up by the American government. In other words, those soldiers who sacrificed themselves on many a battlefield did it for this free, Biblically influenced and founded country, which God himself caused to flourish and be established. When we see those (American) flags near the tombstones, or when we watch from the television or read from the papers about this or that memorial taking place, let us remember that it was God who allowed the victories for which those soldiers fought, the freedom that we enjoy in this country, the courage that those soldiers had, and the founding Bible-based laws of this country.

 May this Memorial Day be an opportunity for us to tell of God’s works on our behalf, for this country, for our family. May it be an opportunity for us to tell of God’s works - that we have escaped with our lives from massacres, unspeakable situations and found our peace here in every way. Memorials and memorial stones create an opportunity for us to bear witness to what God has done. More than the deeds of people, the memorials of life are an invitation to praise the Lord.

 May God give us grace to speak of His Glory, so that we may not forget His deeds in history, be it collective or personal. May the Lord Bless you all. Amen.