

SOLDIERS IN IRAQ: SERVING OUR COUNTRY; LOYAL TO OUR LORD

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It is a scene common in the environments of our armed forces and military support services but it is seldom recognized—the religious devotion and loyalty of the American soldier, sailor, airman, and Marine. To some this is an incredulous reality; the ultimate paradox. Here are those trained in the use of the world's deadliest weaponry bowed in humility to the greater God. Too often civilization has concluded that it is either military might or spiritual submission. Ancient Judah fell into this flawed thinking as she sought greater defense in the power of the strong arm and iron chariot rather than in confidence in the Almighty God (Isaiah 31:1). There is no inconsistency in the Christian serving God in the military branches of our nation! In fact there is much to be commended by those who are in the reserve, active, guard or retired armed forces. This report observes two places and brings into focus the great good that is being accomplished by God's people in our armed forces. You may not agree with my conclusions but you cannot deny the encouraging facts reported below.

Christians have longed served in the interest of freedom as they participated in our armed forces. Throughout time there have been those professional troops who were interested in learning the Truth and serving the Almighty God. The Apostle Paul found an audience among the elite Roman Praetorian guard (Philippians 1:13—true that audience may not have been 100% willing but there was interest!). In every combat situation in which our nation has been involved there are multiple stories of the spiritual strength that surfaced. I will never forget the time that Ray Stilwell was preaching on a Lord's Day in Vietnam and the VC (Viet Cong) set off explosives in an ammo dump. As the entire section seemed to be exploding and all were ducking for cover, Ray continued preaching God's Word! Such anecdotal evidences abound and are great encouragements.

There are a number of anecdotal events that are coming from our current conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. Slowly these facts are making their way into the common knowledge and so I want to give them an even greater exposure because they are most encouraging to me and I believe they will also encourage you. Due to certain reasons (i.e. security) I will not disclose full details about these troops but I will give you enough information to appreciate their efforts.

Please remember that these troops are on full alert and are involved in longer days and nights than you and I could imagine. Exhaustion from the heat, emotional drain, and constant vigilance is a given fact. When you interact with these troops you are impressed with everything they do. Their conduct is exemplary! Their speech is respectful! Their awareness of duty is constant!

Because of unrelenting stresses and pressures our troops need support (e.g. spiritual encouragement and prayers). Only those that have served in the "old" days can remember the exhilaration of mail call. Those serving in the modern times relate to the emotional charge of an email, SKYPE conversation, IMs or text or pictures emailed from back home. One group that is assisting in this support is a military support group in Huntsville, Alabama and coordinated by brother Ed Linebaugh (U.S. Army Retired). I met Ed last December when speaking at the West Huntsville church of Christ. Since then he and I have joined in on several projects. The Mayfair congregation oversees the military ministry called **Military OutReach & Encouragement (M.O.R.E.)**. The website is: www.mayfair.org/connected/opportunities/more

I have long appreciated how Christians serve our nation through military service. Some have sacrificed in ways that are forever unknown but have secured the freedoms that (sadly) the common citizen never appreciates. This service is rendered to our nation but is prompted by a sincere dedication to our Lord Who provided us the Bible that teaches the principles of freedom that should be cherished and defended.

Let me share with you two continuing stories of how certain numbers of our troops are serving our nation and loyal to the Lord. I think you will appreciate what is happening. Please remember that these are but a sampling of the work that is often common but unseen.

First...there is a group of Christian soldiers stationed in Iraq who established a congregation of the Lord's church on base. They located an old storage building, cleaned it up, and turned it into a church building. The sign on the building reads, "Soldiers of Christ Meet Here." The news of this was published in a former publication titled "Church & Family." Here are some of the pictures from this group.



Although these personnel have rotated back to the US and other locations work continues. As you look at the pictures note the weapons stacked beside the communion table.



Second...It is always encouraging to learn of Christians posted throughout the world and eager to be a useful resource in our various projects. Earlier this year I became aware of another group of brethren meeting in Iraq. I forwarded the information on to Ed and M.O.R.E. began communication and encouragement (via cards/letters and prayers). Within the last few days we have received communication from Brad regarding the Lord's Church and the efforts of the Christians in that location. Here is that communication and it will give you a glimpse into the Lord's work many thousands of miles away by those serving faithfully...

Saturday 04 July 2009...*Brother Ed, Thank you for the offer of assistance. Also, thanks for your daily prayers. The Spiritual Power Kits sound like something we could use. We are working with about eleven new converts and twenty-five to thirty Bible students who have not yet been converted. The teachers are myself and brother Robert, whom I have cc'd on this email. We are meeting with the students on a nightly basis at 8 pm. Any material you can send for the new*

converts would be good also. Please send our love and regards to the Saints. Thank you and God bless! Brad

Sunday 05 July 2009...It brings me tremendous joy to send you word of seven new converts this week, at camp Liberty church of Christ in Iraq. Please join us in prayer for the new born Christians listed below.

Sunday we baptized **Herbert B**

Monday night, **Robert N**

Tuesday night we baptized Robert's roommate **Hassan K** who converted from Islam.

Thursday night we had four baptisms:

Wilson T

Julius A

Robert T

Tom M

In Christ, Brad



The church of Christ assembling in Camp Liberty, Iraq

Tuesday 06 July 2009...Brother Ed, I don't know how to thank you enough. We will give thanks to God. We need the Bibles and there will be no problem distributing them. M.O.R.E is making a big impact here and all over the world. Again, thank you all. We are baptizing new ones every day. Last night, **Richard M** was also added to Christ through baptism. The photo attached was last Thursday night when we baptized four. I'm on the left with the wet pants. Brother Robert M is on the right. Yours, In Christ Brad

