

Do You Care about Me?

In Finland's Continuation War, a squad returned from a patrol behind enemy lines. Their mission was a success. Preparing to go out on their patrol, the next squad listened to a report of which routes to use and which to avoid, where the enemy had been sighted, and where landmines were located. One arrogant patrol leader did not agree with the briefing, and ended up taking his whole troop into the jaws of death.

There is a continuing war in the spiritual world. The battle situation varies from one of stationary war to defensive battle. But Christ's army does not attack. The enemy is skilled, and has scored a few victories. Christ's soldiers fight with spiritual weapons on a unified front against a common enemy. All are on the front lines. There are no reserves. Apostle Paul lists the weapons of war each soldier carries. He also exhorts us to suffer the trials of battle like noble warriors. Scripture teaches that as the Day of the Lord approaches, we must continually increase our care and encouragement toward our fellow soldiers (Heb. 10:25).

I once ran in a cross-country race whose route was marked with yellow tape. It was hard to see the lines amid the yellow leaves of the fall forest. At one intersection I ran straight where I was supposed to turn left. If the friendly captain running behind me hadn't shouted, I would have run badly astray. I didn't place well in the race, but I made it to the finish line, and for that I was thankful.

The foremost fruit of faith is love, which manifests itself in encouraging and caring for one another (Gal. 5:22). We might ask ourselves: "If true concern for others has disappeared or if I cannot tolerate the instruction and care of others, what sort of faith do I have?" The book of Hebrews warns us not to look down upon the congregation of God, or hold it in contempt. Paul writes of the evil dwelling in him, and how life is a constant battle between two spheres of influence: one leading to evil, and the other to good. He laments of doing things he does not wish to do, and not doing the things he should. Paul was distressed over this dual nature. Nevertheless, he thanked God, and spoke of his need for a refuge in Christ (Rom. 7:25).

Christ still dwells in God's congregation, which is the pillar and ground of truth (1 Tim. 3:15). Our security and strength remain in God's kingdom and Living Word, which is an inn of refuge from the everyday strife of the world. The Good Samaritan left the wounded man at the inn, prepaid for his care, and promised to repay any unpaid expenses upon returning (Luke 10:35). I want to remain in that inn's care together with the wounded traveler.

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