

YOU'RE IN THE ARMY NOW

“Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus.” (2 Tim 2:3)

A recent ad attempting to recruit volunteers for the U.S. Army reads like this: *“The Army offers training in more than 150 different career paths. As an active duty Soldier, you will have access to all of them. Choose from jobs in art, science, intelligence, combat, aviation, engineering, law and more. There is no limit to what you can achieve.”*

That which is true of modern armies, was also true in Bible times. Not everyone then was on the front lines fighting face to face with the enemy. One classic example of this is found in 1 Samuel 30. At this time David’s army consisted of a mere 600 men. When they went to battle with the Amalekites, however, only 400 actually engaged the enemy while the other 200 remained behind with the supplies. When the battle was over and the victory was won, some of David’s soldiers felt like those 200 guarding the supplies should not share in the plunder. David, however, insisted that “all will share alike”. In fact, he made this principle a lasting ordinance in the armies of Israel (1 Sam. 30:25). They were all in the same army, but not everyone had the same assignment.

The spiritual application of this principle is obvious. While all believers are soldiers in the army of God, not everyone has been given the same assignment. Yes! Everyone is to obey our Commanding Officer. Yes! Everyone is to endure hardship. But no! Not everyone is assigned to be an evangelist or missionary. Yet everyone in the army of Christ will share in the spoils of victory.

While the U.S. Army boasts 150 career paths, the army of Christ has many more. In fact, for those who follow Christ **“Whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him” (Col. 3:17).**

Many years ago those who supported the front line troops by staying with the supplies were called “rope holders”. The expression comes from Paul’s escape from Damascus shortly after his conversion. Paul, as you know, was a chosen vessel. He was to witness before governors and kings. He would labor more abundantly than any other apostle. In fact, before the end of his life he would write more inspired books of the Bible than any other man. Therefore, when the “enemies” of Christ sought to kill Paul, he escaped their hands by being lowered over the walls of Damascus in a basket (Acts 9:25; 2 Cor. 11:33). The ministry of Paul would not have been possible if faithful followers of Christ had not been willing to take hold of the rope and lower him to safety. So also, our most successful evangelists also depend upon someone called by Christ to hold the rope

Remember! All the 150 career paths involve “active duty” soldiers. The following oath is taken by those who enlist in the U.S. Army: *“I, _____, do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; and that I will obey the orders of the President of the United States and the orders of the officers appointed ...”* No matter where the soldier serves, they do so in obedience to orders. So also in the army of Christ: **“No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs — he wants to please his commanding officer.” (2 Tim 2:4)**

Many duties performed by soldiers involve mundane assignments they would find themselves doing if they had never enlisted. The civilian peels potatoes, paints the wall, and mows the grass and so does the soldier. Mowing the grass on an army base, however, is not a civilian matter. It is done in the army in obedience to orders. Believers too often find ourselves engaged in the same mundane work as non believers. When you enlist in the army of Christ, however, everything ceases to be a “civilian affair”.

When David returned from the front lines he found all of the supplies were safe, and was able to say “well done” to his soldiers. When Jesus returns from heaven, may He say the same to us!.