

WAR DELIVERS US FROM ILLUSIONS

Why does God allow wars? Trying to comprehend God and the existence of suffering, people have always been asking this question. The answer is complicated. Let us consider one of its aspects: a war delivers us from dangerous illusions.

Our need for God vs. self-assured atheism

The Bible and historical experience vividly demonstrate that we tend to forget God during peaceful times. When safe and prosperous, people feel self-sufficient, able to control their lives and 'save' themselves. We struggle to realize that we are absolutely dependent on God in everything and need Him above all. War helps to correct this false thinking. There are no atheists in the trenches. As a Ukrainian chaplain said recently, "When somebody is wounded in our unit (or even more so, killed), the soldiers' spirituality spikes up." Sufferings of war are not too high of a price to pay for people's conversion to God. "For what does a man profit, if he gains the whole world but forfeits his soul?" (Mt. 16:26).

The reality of good and evil vs. moral relativism

Another illusion related to atheism is moral relativism. A well-fed and safe atheistic society can fool around with theories like 'there's no absolute truth', or 'good and evil are relative concepts artificially created and changed by people'. You can afford these empty talks until the first bomb, the first death; until your family and your people are being killed, tortured, robbed, and raped. In the face of war horrors, who will dare to deny that evil is real and objective? In the same way, the objective reality of good is evident today, when amongst the sufferings of war we see heroic self-denial, service, courage, and mercy. Ukrainians encourage each other by saying "good will overcome evil". A war silences false prophets of moral relativism because it makes us see vivid expressions of good and evil face to face.

True values vs. false values

In times of material abundance, people tend to 'confuse price tags' in life, ascribing too much value to earthly and material things. When life is safe and pleasant, we are fixated on housing, things, money, etc. Suffering, physical danger, and death make us remember that "naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return" (Job 1:21). On February 24th, 2022 Ukrainians quickly realized the uncertainty and transient nature of material wealth. We saw that family, loved ones, friends, love, and ministry are much more valuable than things and money. In the face of danger, we saved both our families and strangers, sacrificing housing, money, cars, and other things for that purpose.

Real needs vs. exaggerated ones

War forces us to reevaluate even our material needs. It makes us return to the biblical formula: "And if we have food and clothing, with these we shall be content" (1 Tim. 6:8). When our family found temporary refuge in Western Ukraine, it turned out that almost everything three people need can fit in a car. During peaceful times we tend to amass lots of extra things, and they all seem necessary to us.

Masculinity and femininity vs. 'gender equality'

When life is safe, there is another popular illusion about so called 'gender equality'. This vague concept is really a disguise for denying the very reality and value of male and female differences in roles and in life calling. When adherents of this illusion talk about 'equal' they really mean 'the same'. They go as far as denying that God ordained different roles in family and society to men and women, and therefore they have different constitution and, for instance, different physical strength.

Talks about 'equality' stop when cannons begin to speak. Adherents of 'equality' are suddenly gone during the war. They seem to approve that only men have to courageously defend their family and country. Liberals and feminists are not upset by the fact that men are not allowed to leave the country during war, while women are allowed to leave. How can they tolerate such discrimination?!

Eternal vs. temporal

This illusion is related to the previous ones. "A war does not increase statistics of death", because this statistic is always the same: 100%. But war makes the reality of death closer, thus reminding us of eternity. "Memento mori", wise Puritans used to say. Remember death, because it reminds us about the brevity of earthly life, about the inescapable judgment before God, about eternity. War causes people to cling less to temporary earthly goals and to pursue eternal goals and values.

Psychological illusions

Many psychological illusions are popular in modern society. They cannot stand the test of war either. For instance, proponents of 'high self-esteem' and 'hierarchy of psychological needs' are silent now. Every day courageous

Ukrainian warriors refute theories, which claim that without basic needs being met for food, safety, acceptance, etc. a person cannot 'self-actualize' (i.e., give and serve others). Similar to our Savior, our heroic defenders suffer physically, and face constant threats to their lives, yet put themselves on the altar of service to their neighbors, their families, and their people.

Another popular psychological illusion is the so-called 'five stages of grief' theory. When I heard the news that my friend, a chaplain, died from a Russian shell explosion, I did not experience 'stages of denial, anger, bargaining, and depression'. Knowing this brother very well, I am sure that he is a man of God and therefore is now enjoying perfect life with the Lord. Regardless of any 'stages', I mourn with his family and will always miss him until we meet in eternity. But because we are both Christians, I have no reasons to 'deny, feel angry' and so on, "as others who have no hope" (1 Thes. 4:13). A war demonstrates that the human soul works not according to human psychological theories, but according to God's Word about faith and the treasure of one's heart.

Conclusion

So, we can conclude that war helps to deliver people from illusions of atheism, materialism, and humanism. Reminding us of death and of eternity, war tests and exposes illusions that are based on false human ideas and passing earthly values.