

Church of Christ
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I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.
 Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away;
 and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit.
 You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.

Abide in Me, and I in you.

As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine,
 neither can you, unless you abide in Me.

I am the vine, you are the branches.

He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit;

for without Me you can do nothing.

If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered;
 and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned.

If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you,
 you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.

By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit;
 so you will be My disciples.

- John 15:1-8

Assemblies

Sunday Morning	9:00 a.m.
Sunday Evening	6:00 p.m.
Wednesday	7:30 p.m.

Elders

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Faith Is Essential

Faith in Christ is essential to salvation. Some in our society do not believe this, even many who claim to believe in Jesus. The fact is, our nation is religiously pluralistic and has drifted from its founding principals. Freedom of religion has developed from freedom to serve Christ according to conscience, to freedom to any religious belief and practice with immunity from condemnation (unless you actually believe the Bible). Still, the Bible teaches faith in the Lord is necessary.

Jesus said, "If you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins" (Jn. 8:24). Jesus is the I AM (Jn. 8:58). He is the one and only Savior (Acts 4:12). He was God in the flesh and gave His life that we might be set free from sin (Matt. 1:23; Jn. 1:1, 14, 29). He now sits at the right hand of God and will return to judge mankind (Heb. 1:1-3; Acts 17:30, 31). Any and all who deny this will lose their souls.

Sincerity in religion is simply not enough. The Muslim, Jew, Hindu, or Buddhist who is devoted to his religious practices will still go to hell. Why? Because he refuses to believe Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. Without this faith, he cannot have his sins forgiven and go to heaven.

If you believe the New Testament, that it is the inspired, inerrant Word of God, then you must agree with this. If you do not believe faith in Christ is essential to salvation, that sincere Jews, Muslims, etc. will be saved, then you simply do not believe the Word of God. That means, you do not have faith and will lose your soul too. How can a man say he believes God's Word but deny what it teaches—either in part or in whole? He cannot.

Faith is essential. Faith in Christ that results in obedience to His will (Heb. 5:9). Do you have it?

- Steven F. Deaton

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Suffering

Suffering is a part of life; no one can escape it. The most wicked man on earth will suffer, so will the most righteous one. The thing is, we need to suffer as the latter, not the former. Peter wrote, “But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, and evildoer, or as a busybody in other people’s matters. Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter” (1 Pet. 4:15, 16).

“For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.”

- 2 Cor. 4:17

If we sin, we will suffer sooner or later. Sin brings pleasure, otherwise it would have little or no appeal—it may be the satisfaction of revenge on your enemy; the physical euphoria of sexual immorality or intoxication; the enjoyment of a stolen item. However, the pleasure is fleeting (cf. Heb. 11:24-26). If the conscience is not hardened, suffering will follow sin. Revenge on an enemy may lead to that person attacking you, others being angry with you, or, in some cases, jail time. Sexual immorality will bring feelings of remorse and guilt, and may lead to diseases. If it is a case of adultery, the spurned spouse may take revenge. Intoxication will also bring guilt and could lead to physical consequences and prison. None of the end results of sin is pleasant. God designed it this way to help keep us away from sin.

Suffering as a Christian, however, can give you an inner hope and joy. The apostles suffered for Jesus and rejoiced that they were counted worthy (Acts 5:40, 41). When we are persecuted for our faith in Christ, it is a mark of distinction and honor—an honor to partake of the sufferings of Christ (2 Thes. 1:3-5). We may face malice and ridicule because we do not participate in sin (1 Pet. 4:3, 4). Likewise, others will sometimes react with great anger and rage when we expose their sins (Jn. 3:19-21; Eph. 5:11). The world hates those who belong to Christ (Jn. 15:18-21). Our friends and family may forsake us. However, this suffering is tempered by the fact that God is with us.

The child of God who suffers for righteousness knows that the Lord is with him (Heb. 13:5, 6). Too, he knows that heaven awaits—where there is no suffering or sorrow (Rev. 21:4-6). Paul said, “our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory” (2 Cor. 4:17). In other words, anything we must endure because of our loyalty to the Lord is worth it.

Suffering in life is unavoidable. We will all suffer in one form or another at one time or another. The question is, will we suffer as a sinner or saint?

- Steven F. Deaton

Where’s Your Sword?

Children of God are soldiers of Christ. Paul told Timothy that he “must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ” (2 Tim. 2:3). Epaphroditas and Archippas were fellow soldiers of Paul (Phil. 2:25; Philemon 2). We are at war with Satan and the forces of evil.

To fight this war, God has given us armor. Among other items, our armor includes a breastplate, shield, helmet, and sword (Eph. 6:14-17). The sword is the Word of God. It was not given to us to collect dust or rust. God did not give us a sword that should remain in its sheath. It is to be used.

Before a sword can be properly used, however, a soldier must train with it. This training may include time by himself learning to wield it without hurting himself. At other times it may include training with one more knowledgeable and experienced, or with others who are learning to use it. Likewise, even after years of experience, the wise soldier continues to practice with his sword.

So, again, where’s your sword? Is it being put to use? Are you training with it in personal study or Bible classes? Do you take it with you to worship services and study from it as a lesson is taught? Have you used it lately to fight the enemy? Or, is your sword simply collecting dust or safely tucked away in a drawer?

If you fail to use your sword, you will be defeated by the enemy. Your family and friends, who could be helped, will be subject to defeat if you are not there to defend and protect them. The cause of Christ will suffer if your sword is sheathed. Find it, take it out, and use it.

- Steven F. Deaton