

Prayer List

Sierra
Gene
Veda
Judy
The Williams' Family
Ophelia

Services:

Sunday

Bible Class 9:00 a.m.
Assembly 9:50 a.m.
Assembly 6:00 p.m.

Wednesday

Bible Class 7:00 p.m.

Pinole Tidings

www.pinolechurchofchrist.com

Vol. 14, No. 24 - March 24, 2013

Elders:

Brad Behrens - bradbehrens@pinolechurchofchrist.com
Michael Odom - MichaelOdom@pinolechurchofchrist.com
Ernie Sprinkel - preacher@pinolechurchofchrist.com

This Week's Question:

According to the Law, how much tax did all adult Israelites have to pay when the census was taken?

Answer To Last Week's Question:

Jeroboam's - 1 Kings 14:1-6

Published by the church of Christ which meets at 755 Pinole Valley Road, Pinole, CA 94564, Phone (510) 724-1994, (Mailing address: church of Christ, P.O. Box 453, Pinole, CA 94564)

Am I A Soldier of the Cross?

Jack Smith

THE TITLE OF THIS ARTICLE REALLY includes two questions and an emphasis. Am I a soldier of the cross? As we contemplate enlisting in this volunteer army we ought to take note of the seriousness of our endeavor. It includes a lifetime of service (Revelation 2:10; 2 Timothy 4:6-8), and as we grow to realize more and more what is expected of us, we are even forbidden to look back with regret to the ease of civilian life. The Lord says that "No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62). Let us look at the difficulties of being a soldier of the cross, and then at the help the Lord provides.

One of the first problems we encounter in being a soldier is our susceptibility to being side-tracked. Paul warns Timothy that, "No soldier on service entangleth himself in the affairs of this life; that he may please him who enrolled him as a soldier" (2 Timothy 2:4), and yet we allow so many things to distract us. What about my family, my job, my vacation, hunting season, fishing, football, etc. Each may be good in its own way, but when they lead us from the Lord we have failed. All Christians are front line soldiers, and should be vigilant at all times.

Another problem is mentioned in verse three of Paul's exhortation to Timothy, and it is the warning that we must "suffer hardship." In every chapter in Second Timothy we find a warning about suffering. It is part of our life, or should be: "Yea, and all that would live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (3:12). Suffering is not something we seek, but if we're the kind of people God describes as "peculiar" we will encounter it. This suffering is made more difficult when we understand that it is to be borne cheerfully (Acts 5:41; 1 Peter 4:14). God will not have grumbling, murmuring soldiers.

A third difficulty we encounter is remembering that we are soldiers of the cross. Many times in the heat of the battle we can be filled with the "bloodlust," the desire to "get" the enemy, to destroy no matter what the cost. Soldiers of the cross are concerned with defending the faith once delivered—not private opinions, desires, or causes. We need also to remember that if we "win" the argument, but lose the soul it is not a resounding victory (see 2 Timothy 2:24–26; Ephesians 4:15).

The last of the difficulties we'll consider is that of anonymity. It's so easy to get lost in an "army." Remember the calisthenics in P.E. class? How many didn't skip a push-up or two because the coach couldn't see everyone? Though we are only one, and there may be hundreds or thousands around us, the strength of an army is that "every man stands in his place." Paul says that the church grows and is strengthened "through that which every joint supplieth" (Ephesians 4:16). Perhaps we need to think of ourselves as sentries on duty. If we see a soul in need, a truth being assailed, we must be ready and anxious to act.

Our vision is terribly out of focus if we look only at the problems without being aware of the assistance offered by the

Lord. A well-trained, dedicated army is at a loss without adequate leadership, and our leadership is far more than adequate. We need to understand that we are not being sent into a hopeless battle, but are being led by one who is worthy of our confidence, and through Him we will be "more than conquerors." In the gospels we learn of the experience of the Lord in defeating temptation and the tempter. We see Him dealing with false teaching and false teachers. We see Him leading us in life, through death, and into heaven. In the area of ability and experience our Lord has no peer.

We need also to be aware of His concern for us. Our physical welfare should never be cause for anxiety if we are seeking first His kingdom (Matthew 6:33). Our spiritual welfare is also provided for by one who knows well the weakness of humankind (Hebrews 4:15f). We need to be convinced of the perfection of His plan for the organization of His army, His ability to carry this army through battle to victory, and then to rule over a kingdom of peace. As we learn to trust Him implicitly we improve our ability to serve in the greatest cause every known.

Am I a soldier of the cross? Arm yourself with truth, courage and the determination to stand with the King. Show your concern for the cause by living righteously, serving selflessly, ever manifesting your conviction that the Master's way is far superior to any that man could devise. Remember His encouragement: "I will in no wise fail thee, neither will I in any wise forsake thee. So that with good courage we say, The Lord is my helper; I will not fear: What shall man do unto me?" (Hebrews 13:5–6).