

## One Essential Way?

When looking at the religious world today, chaos and confusion are viewed on every side. There are hundreds, perhaps even thousands, of religious bodies that claim to be the church that Christ established. All of them hold to some doctrine that distinguishes it from the others, and all make this doctrine a test of fellowship. Yet, all the while we hear such expressions as, “Join the church of your choice,” “One church is as good as another,” “All good moral people are going to be saved,” and perhaps the one that sums up the true feelings of those who make such statements is, “Oh well, the church is really not essential to one’s soul salvation anyway—we’re all going to the same place.”



### There Are Only Two Ways and They Don’t Lead to the Same Place

Despite the claims of many, Jesus said there are only two ways. *“Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it”* (Matthew 7:13-14). Jesus says there is a broad way, a way in which many will go because it is the course of least resistance, but the end is destruction. On the other hand, there is a way few will find because it is a hard way. It is a way that has restrictions and calls for self-discipline.

### Christ Is The Only Way to Get to the Father

Jesus says, *“I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me”* (John 14:6). There is no other way to the Father than the way Jesus has set forth. We must be in Christ in order to inherit eternal life. In **John 15:1-8** Christ gives an illustration to show the relationship we must have with Him. He says He is the vine, and God is the husbandman. Notice verse four: *“Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me.”* Without being in Christ, by not walking in the way in which He directs, one is dead spiritually.

Paul says in **Galatians 3:26-27**, *“For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.”* Therefore, not being in Christ makes it impossible for one to be a child of God.

### The Church Is His Way—Those in Him

In **Acts 9** we read that Saul of Tarsus *“still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest, and asked for letters from him to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, both men and women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem”* (Acts 9:1-2). From this we learn that those of “the Way” are the same as those who are “disciples of Lord.”

In **Acts 19**, Luke records Paul’s stay in Ephesus. For some three months he taught there in the synagogue. Luke records this event in verses 8 and 9: *“And he entered the synagogue and continued speaking out boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God. But*

when some were becoming hardened and disobedient, speaking evil of the Way before the people, he withdrew from them and took away the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus.” From this we learn that those who are of the Way are those with a good and honest heart, who believe the message that has been preached, accept it, and obey it. Also, those that are in “the Way” are the same as those who are in the “kingdom of God.”

In **Matthew 16:18-19** Jesus says, “I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.” Here we see that His “church” and His “kingdom” are the same. Therefore, to be in the Way, to be in Christ, to be His disciple, is to be in His kingdom, His church.

Furthermore, in **Galatians 1:13** Paul says, “For you have heard of my former manner of life in Judaism, how I used to persecute the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it.” Remember Luke said in **Acts 9** that Paul sought to persecute those of the Way, and here Paul, reviewing his past life, says that he persecuted the church. Therefore, to be in Christ is to be a member of the church which he established.

### Is The Church Essential for Salvation?

Some may raise the above question. Perhaps a more accurate question would be, “Is it possible for a saved person not to be in the church?” When realizing that the church is altogether those who are saved, its essentiality becomes clear.

The church is essential because Christ is the head of it and to refuse to walk by His commandments is to be in complete rebellion against God. “And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all” (**Ephesians 1:22-23**).

The church is essential because it is that group of people that have been purchased by the blood of Christ. Paul told the elders from Ephesus: “Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood” (**Acts 20:28**).

The church is essential because it is in the church that we receive the promise of salvation that God has revealed through His word. The church is His body and He “is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body” (**Ephesians 5:23**).

Yes, the church is essential. It is God’s way. It is according to His purpose, His plan, and His design. There can be salvation in none other—no other way. All other paths lead unto destruction.