
Church in Campbell Weekly News

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THE CHURCH IN EPHESUS— LOVE, LIFE, AND LIGHT

The book of Revelation is very well composed. Following chapter one, chapters two and three give us a clear view of seven practical churches. These seven churches are excellent illustrations, revealing the local churches, not in doctrine, but in actual practice. By considering these seven churches we can see clearly what a local church is and should be. The seven epistles in chapters two and three are the record of the actual situation existing in the seven churches at the time these epistles were written. However, since this book is a book of signs with a prophetic nature, the situations of the seven churches are also signs, signifying prophetically the progress of the church in seven stages. The first epistle, to the church in Ephesus, affords a picture of the church at the end of the first stage, during the last part of the first century. The second epistle, to the church in Smyrna, prefigures the suffering church under the persecution of the Roman Empire, from the last part of the first century to the early part of the fourth century, when Constantine the Great, the Caesar of the Roman Empire, brought the church into imperial favor. The third epistle, to the church in Pergamos, pre-symbolizes the worldly church, the church married to the world, from the day Constantine accepted Christianity to the time the papal system was established in the latter part of the sixth century. The epistle to the church in Thyatira depicts prophetically the apostate church, from the ordination of the papal system in the latter part of the sixth century to the end of this age, when Christ comes back. The fifth epistle, to the church in Sardis, prefigures the Protestant church, from the Reformation in the early part of the sixteenth century to Christ's coming back. The sixth epistle, to the church in Philadelphia, predicts the church of brotherly love, the recovery of the proper church life, from the early part of the nineteenth century, when the brothers were raised up in England to practice the church life outside all denominational and divisive systems, to the second appearing of the Lord. The seventh epistle, to the church in Laodicea, foreshadows the degraded church life of the brothers in the nineteenth century, from the latter part of the nineteenth century until the Lord's return. In this message and the following six messages we shall treat each of these churches respectively.

In this message we come to the church in Ephesus (2:1-7). The crucial words in this message are love, life, and light. The basic requirement for having the church life is our love toward the Lord. There is no problem, of course, with the Lord's love toward us. He has loved us and He continues to love us. The problem is with our love toward Him.

Although we have loved Him in the past and may love Him now, there is the danger that our love for the Lord Jesus might fade. The epistle to the church at Ephesus warns us of this. This letter also gives us a clear revelation of the source of the degradation of the church life—the fading of the first love. As we shall see, love gives us the position, the ground, the right, and the privilege to eat of the tree of life. Love gives us the supply of life. If we love the Lord, we shall have the full right to enjoy Him as the tree of life, as our life supply. Light always follows life, issuing out of the abundant supply of life. Life gives us light. In the tabernacle the lampstand comes after the showbread table, indicating that when we enjoy Christ as our life supply, we shall have the light of life. It is vitally important that we love the Lord. If we have love, then we shall have the life symbolized by the tree of life and the light signified by the lampstand.

In brief, the problem with the church at Ephesus was the fading of the first love toward the Lord. Because of this, the Lord came in to deal thoroughly with this church, warning her that if she did not repent, she was in danger of having her lampstand removed. Anyone among them who would repent and return to his first love would be considered by the Lord to be an overcomer. The Lord promised the overcomer the right to enjoy Him as the tree of life. Of course, the lampstand will always remain among those who have overcome. However, if we would not repent of our fading love toward the Lord, we will miss the right to eat of the tree of life and the lampstand will be removed from us. If this were the case, we would be without love, and light. What a pitiful condition this would be!

We in the local churches today must be warned of the possibility of losing our first love for the Lord. We may work and labor for the Lord and we may be pure doctrinally and correct scripturally, yet not have the first love for the Lord. Perhaps in the coming years we shall not love Him as much as we do now. Beware of this. It is better to lose some of our work than to fail in our love for the Lord. Our love for Him must be the first love. We all must say, "Lord, I love You. I do not love the works I do for You, and I do not appreciate the labor I spend for You. Lord, I love You. If my labor for You frustrates me from loving You, I will cease laboring." Do not allow anything to separate you from the love of the Lord. We must take care of the first love and constantly love the Lord.

WHAT IS PRAYER

Issue No. 1 The Present Testimony (Br Nee)

Prayer is the most wonderful action in the spiritual realm; it is also the most mysterious matter. Prayer is a mystery. After we present a few questions concerning prayer, we will see how mysterious prayer is. These questions are hard to answer. But this does not mean that the mystery of prayer is unknowable or that the questions concerning prayers are unanswerable. It merely means that those who have the answers are few. For this very reason, there are few who can accomplish works for God in prayer. It is not a matter of how much we pray, but a matter of how much we have prayed according to the principle of prayer. Only those prayers that are prayed according to the principle of prayer are worthwhile.

The first question we will ask is: why should we pray? What is the use of praying? God is omniscient and omnipotent. Why would He work only after we pray? Since He knows everything, why do we have to tell Him anything (Phil. 4:6)? Since He is almighty, why would He not do it by Himself? Why does He need us to pray? Why is it that only those who pray receive, and those who seek find, and those who knock enter (Matt. 7:7)? Why does God say, "You do not have because you do not ask" (James 4:2)?

After asking the above questions, we also want to ask: is prayer contrary to the will of God? What is the relationship between prayer and justice? We know that God does not do anything that is contrary to His will. If it is His will to open the door, why does He have to wait until we knock before He will open? Why would He not open the door for us according to His will, without us knocking? He knows everything. If He knows that we need an open door, why will He wait until we knock before He opens? If the door should be open, if it is God's will that there is the open door, and if God knows that we need to have the door open, why does He not just open the door? Why do we have to knock? What convenience does it give to God for us to knock on the door?

We also have to ask: Since God's will is to open the door, and since it is His will to have the door open, will God not open the door if we do not knock? Will He allow His will and His justice to be delayed and not accomplished just for the sake of waiting for our prayer? Will He allow His will of opening the door to be limited by our not knocking on the door?

If this is so, then God's will is restricted by us! Is God really omnipotent? If He is, why can He not open the door independent of us? Why must He wait for us to knock before He will open the door? Will God really accomplish

His will? If He will, why does the opening of the door (His will) have to be controlled by our knocking on the door (prayer)?

After we have asked these questions, we will see that prayer is indeed a great mystery. Here we can see a principle of God's work. This principle is that God's people have to pray before God will rise up to work. God's will is accomplished by the prayer of those who belong to Him. The believers' prayers accomplish God's will. God will not accomplish His will alone; He will only accomplish His will when His people are sympathetic with Him in prayer.

If this is the case, prayer is nothing but the believers' act of working together with God. Prayer is the union of the believers' will with God's will. The prayer of the believers on earth is an utterance of God's will in heaven. Prayer is not an utterance of our own wishes, a plea for God to yield to our cry and fulfill our own wishes. Prayer is not to compel God to change His will by force or ask Him to do what He does not want to do. Prayer is the believers' utterance of God's will out of their own mouth; it is the believers' request before God that He accomplish His own will. (To be Continued)

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Burdens for Church Prayers

- Strengthening of prayer in the church life on all levels: personal, husband and wife, vital group, church prayer
- Pray for the gospel friends of past Thanksgiving gathering.
- Pray for the English-speaking testimony and gospel preaching on West Valley College campus.
- Pray for the burden of raising up next generation for building up of the body of Christ.
- For GOW training: Vital groups be raised up, attending prayer meeting, prophesying on Lord's day by daily enjoying His word and pursue the truth.

Announcement

- Bible Reading Schedule of Revelations:

LD	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
2:1~7	2:8~9	2:10~11	2:12~14	2:15~17	2:18-23	2:23~29

- 12/11 prayer meeting at Campbell meeting hall.
- Registration for 7th term GOW training due on 12/16.
- 12/15 Monthly GOW training at Cupertino meeting hall.
- Financial needs for Boston Training center and Church in Hayward.