

PRAYER BURDEN

*“For the love of Christ
constrains us ... And He
died for all that those
who live may no longer
live to themselves but to
Him who died for them
and has been raised.”*

1. Lord, we thank You for selecting churches in the past to match the conditions of the churches in the future to show us **the way** the church must take for us to **rise up** and **walk** according to the **normal pattern** in the beginning.

2. Lord, You are **the best** and **the first** in the whole universe, recover us, bring us back to our *“first love”* we give You the preeminence in everything, **Lord we love You**.

3. Lord, continue to demand for us to **hold on** to our **first love** to You, as Your love is forever fresh which is the **motivating power** to **work**, **labor** and **endure** for the building up of Your Body in love.

4. Lord, bring us back to the **normal condition** of the church as Your expression, and You as the reality and content of the church. Lord, fulfill Your purpose make us all **priests** of God.

5. Lord, restore Your original intention for us to **eat** You as the **tree of life**, enjoying and maintaining our **eating** of You in our church life which is our paradise today.

6. Lord, we need You as our **first love**, to enjoy You as the tree of **life**, and right away becomes our **light** of life for us to **shine** corporately as the lampstand Your testimony.

7. Please pray for the church in **Coquitlam**, release the material **offerings** for the fulfillment of all the terms and conditions of purchase of the meeting hall.

8. Please pray for the **raising up** of the lampstand in **Abbotsford**.

9. Lord, remember the church in **Regina**: to recover the first love and repent to do the first work.

This Weeks’s Pursuit: Returning to the Orthodoxy of the Church - Message Two

The Church in Ephesus

Scripture Reading: Rev. 2:1-7

I. With regard to the seven churches, which are represented by the seven lampstands, we should understand three things:

These seven churches were real churches existing at that time. They represent the sevenfold history of the church. The conditions of the churches exist simultaneously in the church’s sevenfold history.

II. Revelation 2 and 3 show us what we need to do to return to the orthodoxy of the church—what it is that actually pleases the Lord, what it is that the Lord condemns, and what the Lord’s actual way is for the church:

The seven epistles to the seven churches start with the Lord and end with a call to the overcomers; the overcomers are the normal and ordinary ones; those who are not abnormal during the time of abnormality are the overcomers.

III. There are four main points in the Lord’s epistle to the church in Ephesus— love, life, light, and the lampstand—2:1-7:

We must not leave the Lord as our first love, and we must do the first works; *“but if not, I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place, unless you repent”*. The leaving of the first love is the source of and main reason for the failure of the church throughout the ages. Colossians tells us that our Christ must have the first place in all things; He must have the preeminence. To recover the first love is to consider the Lord Jesus as the first in everything; if we make Christ everything in our life, this means that we have overcome the loss of the first love. To overcome the loss of the first love is to be constrained by the love of Christ not merely to live for the Lord but to live to the Lord. To live to the Lord means that we are determined to gain the honor of being well pleasing to Him by being absolutely under His control, direction, and governing and that we care uniquely for His aims and goals. To live to the Lord means that we are under the Lord’s direction and control and that we fulfill His requirements, satisfy His desires, and complete what He intends.

The first love must be to have God, Christ, the Lord, our Master, as the first One in everything—in great things as well as in small things; we need to ask the Lord to forgive us for all the things in which we do not give Him the preeminence. The **“first works”** are works that issue from the **“first love”**. When we stand before the judgment seat of Christ, we will surely not be praised for the greatness or volume of our work; what the Lord will investigate is how much of what we do is out of our love to Him. Only those works that are motivated by love are the gold, the silver, and the precious stones; when the saints are filled with the first love for the Lord, everything they do originates from their love for the Lord and is a **“labor of love”**.

For the Lord to remove the church’s lampstand does not mean that from now on it has no more outward activities or moves; it merely means that it can no longer be God’s faithful testimony: If we leave the first love to the Lord and do not repent and do the first works, it is possible that we may still be standing on the ground of locality, but we have lost the reality and testimony of the Triune God as typified by the golden lampstand. The removal of the lampstand means that before God the church’s position is lost and that she has lost her testimony, the testimony of Jesus; she has lost her position and is disqualified from being the church of the Lord’s testimony anymore.

If we have the first love toward the Lord, we will hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which the Lord also hates. The Greek word for *Nicolaitan* is composed of two words, one meaning “conquer” or “be victorious over” and another meaning “common people,” “secular people,” or “laity.” *Nicolaitans*, then, must refer to a group of people who esteem themselves higher than the common believers; this was undoubtedly the hierarchy adopted and established by Catholicism and Protestantism; the Lord hates the works, the behavior, of these Nicolaitans, and we must hate what the Lord hates. **In the proper church life there should be neither clergy nor laity; all the believers should be priests of God**; because the mediatorial class destroys the universal priesthood in God’s economy, the Lord hates it.

In such a good, orderly, and formal church life like the church in Ephesus, we need to maintain the eating of Christ as the tree of life. If we give the preeminence to Christ in everything and enjoy Him as the tree of life every day, we will be marvelous, overcoming Christians, and the church life will become a paradise to us. God’s original intention was that man should eat of the tree of life; because of the fall, the way to the tree of life was closed to man; through the redemption of Christ the way by which man could touch the tree of life, which is God Himself in Christ as life to man, was opened again. But in the church’s degradation, religion crept in with its knowledge to distract the believers in Christ from eating Him as the tree of life; hence, the Lord promised to grant the overcomers to eat of Himself as the tree of life in the Paradise of God (the New Jerusalem) as a reward; this is an incentive for them to leave religion with its knowledge and return to the enjoyment of Himself.

This promise of the Lord restores the church to God’s original intention according to His economy; what the Lord wants the overcomers to do is what the whole church should do in God’s economy; because of the church’s degradation, the Lord came to call the overcomers to replace the church in the accomplishing of

WEEK	LORD’S TABLE MEETING	PRAYER MEETING	YP MEETING	HOME MEETING	OFFERING
Feb. 12 - Feb. 18, 2017	23	13	11	5	\$285.00
Feb. 19 - Feb. 25, 2017	19	13	9	8	\$221.00

God's economy. Eating the tree of life, that is, enjoying Christ as our life supply, should be the primary matter in the church life.

The content of the church life depends on the enjoyment of Christ; the more we enjoy Him, the richer the content will be, but to enjoy Christ requires us to love Him with the first love. If we leave our first love toward the Lord, we will miss the enjoyment of Christ and lose the testimony of Jesus; consequently, the lampstand will be removed from us. These three things—**loving** the Lord, **enjoying** the Lord, and being the **testimony** of the Lord—go together.

Love is related to life, and **life** is related to light; love, life, and light are a trinity. If we make Christ the first in everything, we will have the first love; if we have this love, we have life, and we will enjoy the Lord; if we have life, this life becomes light to us. The light of the lampstand, the church, shines forth corporately versus individually in the dark night of the church age. If we are enjoying Christ as our love, life, and light, we will keep the testimony of Jesus as the shining of the lampstand in our locality.

We need to remember these four words that begin with the letter *l*—*love, life, light, and lampstand*: We must give the Lord Jesus the preeminence in every way and in everything to recover the first love. Then we will enjoy Him as the tree of life, and this life right away becomes the light of life. Then we will be shining in our daily life and corporately as the lampstand; otherwise, the lampstand will be removed from us individually and from the church corporately. If today we take Christ as the first in everything, we will have love, we will enjoy Him as life, we will shine forth with Him as light, and we will become the shining lampstand as the testimony of Jesus; this eventually will become our reward not only in this age but even more in the coming age; in the thousand-year kingdom we will enjoy Christ as our reward in the Paradise of God.

"One Life-Study a Day Makes One Holy"

LIFE-STUDY OF EPHESIANS

February 27, 2017, Monday

Message Twenty-Five

PUTTING ON THE NEW MAN

The **creation** of the new man is one thing, but the **experience** of the new man is another. From Christ's side, the new man has already been created. But from our side, our experience, **the new man is being renewed**. According to the new creation, the new man has been completed by the work of Christ. But according to our experience, the new man is in the process of being renewed daily. **This renewing is actually the putting on of the new man.**

At the time of our regeneration, the new man was put into, or **born into**, our spirit. Now this new man must spread into every part of our being. This spreading of the new man is the putting on of the new man. It is also the renewing. By this we see that the putting on of the new man is not an outward, objective matter, but an inward, subjective experience.

Both Ephesians 4 and Colossians 3 indicate that in order **to put on the new man**, we first need to put off the old man. Ephesians 4:22 says, "*Put off concerning the former manner of life the old man.*" ... By putting off our manner of life, we put off the old man in a practical way. To bury the former manner of life is virtually the same as burying the old man.

In our experience of the new man, the new man is gradually renewed unto a full knowledge according to the image of the Creator. This renewal takes place by the putting away of the former manner of life and by our living according to the spirit. In the past we have spoken a great deal about our spirit. However, we should not separate this from the matter of putting off our former manner of life. If we would have the new man as our living, we must firstly put off our former manner of life. Then we must allow our spirit to become the leading, dominating, directing, and governing element of our whole being. If we live in this way, spontaneously the process of renewing will take place within us. Such a continual renewing is the putting on of the new man. This is the church life, the life and living of the new man.

February 28, 2017, Tuesday

Message Twenty - Six

BOTH RECONCILED TO GOD IN ONE BODY AND FELLOW-CITIZENS OF THE SAINTS AND MEMBERS OF THE HOUSEHOLD OF GOD

Ephesians 2:16 says, "*And might reconcile both in one Body to God through the cross, slaying the enmity by it.*" The word "both" refers to the Jews and the Gentiles. Not only the uncircumcised Gentiles but also the circumcised Jews needed reconciliation to God through the redemption of Christ accomplished on His cross.

Verse 16 says that the Jews and the Gentiles have been reconciled in one Body. This one Body, the church, is the one new man in the previous verse. It was in this Body that both the Jews and the Gentiles were reconciled to God through the cross. We, the believers, both Jews and Gentiles, were reconciled not only for the Body of Christ, but also in the Body of Christ. What a revelation here! We were reconciled to God; we were saved in the Body of Christ.

In the one Body we have been reconciled to God through the cross. This is a fact. Now we may have access unto the Father and contact Him directly. This is an experience. We have been reconciled to God positionally for salvation, and we have access unto the Father experientially for enjoyment. It is significant that these verses do not say that we are reconciled to the Father and have access to God. No, having been reconciled to God once for all, we now have access to the Father for a continual enjoyment. Remember, Christ did not reconcile individuals. He reconciled two peoples, the Jews and the Gentiles, in one Body. If He had merely reconciled individual sinners, He would not have needed to reconcile them in the Body. But in order to reconcile two collective peoples, He had to do so in the Body.

The Jews and the Gentiles once were separated, but on the cross Christ broke down the wall of separation and created them into one entity, the one new man. But what about their relationship to God? In order for them to be reconciled to God, there was the need of a body as the instrument. When Christ created the two into one new man, He simultaneously reconciled them to God in one Body. When they were created into the new man, it was possible for them to be reconciled to God in one Body. Hence, the one Body was the means through which they were reconciled to God. Therefore, in verses 15 and 16 the one new man is mentioned before the Body.

After being reconciled to God, there was still the need for the Jews and the Gentiles to have **access unto the Father for enjoyment**. This access is not merely **in the Body**, but also **in the Spirit**. To be in the Body is a fact, but to be in the Spirit is an experience. Although we are in the Body, we may not be in the Spirit. Instead, we may be in our wandering thoughts.

Now that we are no longer strangers and sojourners, we are fellow-citizens of the saints. The term "fellow-citizens" indicates the kingdom of God. All the believers, both Jewish and Gentile, are citizens of God's kingdom, which is a sphere wherein God exercises His authority. As long as anyone is a believer, he is a citizen of the kingdom

of God. This citizenship involves rights and responsibilities. We enjoy the rights of the kingdom, and we bear the responsibilities of the kingdom. These two things always go together. For example, as citizens of the United States, we enjoy certain rights, but we must also fulfill our responsibility to pay taxes.

Verse 19 reveals that we are also “*members of the household of God.*” This phrase indicates the house of God. Both the Jewish and Gentile believers are members of God’s house. God’s house is a matter of life and enjoyment; all believers were born of God into His house to enjoy His riches. God’s kingdom is a matter of rights and responsibility; all believers who were born into the house of God have the civil rights of and bear responsibility in the kingdom of God. In such a short verse two profound matters are covered: the kingdom of God with its rights and responsibilities and the house of God with its enjoyment of the Father’s life and riches.

As unsaved Gentiles, we once were far off from God and the commonwealth of Israel, but now we have an intimate relationship with the saints. We are fellow-citizens of the saints and members of God’s household. ... The Jews and the Gentiles are not only citizens of the same kingdom, but also folks of the same family. We need to regard the saints in an intimate way as our folks. Being members of the family of God must not only be our doctrine, but also our experience. In the universe God has just one household, one family. No matter what our background may be, as believers we all are members of God’s unique universal family, and all the saints are our folks. Do not take this matter lightly, but consider it seriously as an important aspect of the church. What an intimate relationship we have in the household of God!

March 01, 2017, Wednesday

Message Twenty-Seven

GROWING INTO A HOLY TEMPLE AND BEING BUILT INTO A DWELLING PLACE OF GOD

Ephesians 2:21 says, “*In Whom all the building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord.*” Here we see that in Christ, who is the cornerstone, all the building, including both Jewish and Gentile believers, is fitted together and is growing into a holy temple. Since the building is a living one (1 Pet. 2:5), it is **growing**. It grows into a holy temple. The actual building of the church as the house of God is by the growth in life of the believers. Today the church is growing. However, it is not growing in our natural life, but in the divine life, the spiritual life. Verse 21 also says that all the building is fitted together. The word “fitted” means being made suitable for the condition and situation of the **building**.

The phrase “all the building” refers to the **universal church**. If you consider the past nineteen centuries of church history, you may find it difficult to see the growth of the building. But do not be disappointed. The purpose of God cannot be thwarted. The universal building is still growing. In Matthew 16 the Lord Jesus prophesied that He would build His church. The building in Matthew 16:18 is the very building in Ephesians 2:21. Although the growth of the building is slow and hardly noticeable, it is nonetheless taking place.

The **temple** is the **place in which God’s people contact God, worship Him, and hear His oracle**. The **dwelling place** is a **place of rest**. God rests in His dwelling place. However, the temple and the dwelling place are not two distinct places. Rather, they are two aspects, two functions or usages, of the same building. The church is the place where God’s people contact God, worship Him, and receive His word, and it is also the place of God’s rest.

All the local churches are part of the universal church, not something in addition to it or apart from it. All the local churches added together equal the universal church. This means that apart from the local churches there is no universal church. Hence, the building of the local church is the building of the universal church. All the local churches have just one building. The church in Anaheim does not have one building; the church in Chicago, another; and the church in New York, still another. However, our natural concept of the building is that there is a different building in each locality. In this universe there is just one building with a universal aspect and a local aspect. No matter how many churches there may be on earth, there is still just one building with these two aspects.

March 02, 2017, Thursday

Message Twenty-Eight

THE STEWARDSHIP OF THE GRACE

Paul says in 3:2, “*If indeed you have heard of the stewardship of the grace of God which was given to me for you.*”... The Greek word translated “**stewardship**” in verse 2 is *oikonomia*. According to ancient usage, *oikonomia* denoted a stewardship, a dispensation, or an administration. At the time of Paul, many rich families had stewards whose responsibility was to distribute food and other necessities to members of the household. Our Father has a great family, a divine household. Because our Father has such vast riches, there is the need in His household for many stewards to dispense these riches to His children. This dispensing is the stewardship. Hence, a stewardship is a dispensation. The word “dispensation” here does not denote an age or means by which God deals with people; it refers to God’s dispensing of His riches into His chosen ones. This dispensation is the stewardship with the dispensing ministry of the ministers of God. This ministry of dispensing is also God’s administration. Today God administers by dispensing Himself into us. This stewardship, this dispensation, this administration, is God’s economy. In the New Testament economy of God there is the desperate need for the stewardship of grace.

In order to have such a stewardship, there is the need of stewards. Every apostle is a steward of God. As an apostle, Paul was a steward who dispensed the riches of God to His children. Although Paul was a steward, in 3:1 he referred to himself as “*the prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you, the nations.*” The Apostle Paul considered himself the prisoner of Christ. Apparently he was confined in a physical prison; actually he was **imprisoned in Christ**. On the basis of such a status, the status of his actual living as a prisoner in Christ, he besought the saints. In releasing the revelation of God’s mystery concerning the church in chapters one and two, Paul spoke on the basis of his status as the apostle of Christ through the will of God. That status was the authority of his revelation concerning the church. In beseeching the saints to walk worthily of God’s calling, he spoke from his status as the prisoner of the Lord. His status as the apostle of Christ qualified him to release God’s revelation, whereas his status as the prisoner of the Lord demonstrated his walk in the Lord, by which he could inspire and beseech the saints to walk in the Lord as he did.

The **stewardship of the grace** is the dispensing of the riches of Christ. According to the context of chapter three, grace refers to the riches of Christ. When the riches of Christ are enjoyed by you, they become grace. Paul’s ministry was to dispense the riches of Christ as grace to the believers. A stewardess on an airplane dispenses food to the passengers; she does not dispense information on how to cook. Likewise, the Apostle Paul dispensed the riches of Christ to the saints. This is what we are doing in the ministry today.

This stewardship is according to God’s economy. With God it is a matter of economy; with us it is a matter of stewardship. All the saints, no matter how insignificant they may seem to be, have a stewardship according to God’s economy. This means that every saint can infuse Christ into others. Even a young sister in high school can dispense Christ into her classmates. This dispensing of Christ into others is the stewardship according to God’s economy.

This stewardship of the grace is for God's dispensation. We have seen that the desire of God's heart is to dispense His riches, which actually are Himself, into His chosen people. After these riches have been dispensed into us, we need to take up the burden to dispense them into others. With God, these riches are His economy; with us, they are the stewardship; and when they are dispensed by us into others, they are God's dispensation. When God's economy reaches us, it becomes our stewardship. When we carry out our stewardship by dispensing Christ into others, it becomes the dispensation of God into them. Hence, we have the economy, the stewardship, and the dispensation.

March 03, 2017, Friday

Message Twenty-Nine

THE REVELATION OF THE MYSTERY

The Son of God is the embodiment of God. God's economy is to dispense Himself into a great number of human beings in order to produce a Body for this embodiment of Himself. This means that the Son of God as the embodiment of God requires a Body, an increase, an expansion. This expansion can be produced only by God's dispensing of Himself into His chosen people. This is the greatest mystery in the universe. ... By revelation this great mystery, which had been hidden until the coming of the Lord Jesus, has been unveiled to us.

In 3:4 Paul speaks of the **mystery of Christ**. The mystery of God in Colossians 2:2 is Christ, whereas the mystery of Christ here is the church. God is a mystery, and Christ, as the embodiment of God to express Him, is the **mystery of God**. Christ is also a mystery, and the church, as the Body of Christ to express Him, is the mystery of Christ. This mystery was hidden in other generations, but has been revealed in the New Testament age. The mystery of Christ, the church, which is His Body, was hidden in the Old Testament ages. None of the Old Testament saints knew anything regarding this mystery. But it is revealed in the New Testament to all believers through the apostles and prophets. Today our ministry is simply to carry on this revelation.

The producing of the church to be the Body of Christ is according to the eternal purpose which God made in Christ in eternity past (3:11). The formation of the church is not accidental, but eternally planned. God's purpose in having the church is to dispense Himself into His chosen people (3:9). Hence, the church as the Body of Christ is the dispensation of God.

February 04, 2017, Saturday

Message Thirty

THE RICHES OF CHRIST PRODUCING THE CHURCH

The riches of Christ are depicted in types. It is not easy to find all the **types** of Christ in the Old Testament... Along with the types, there are the **shadows** and figures of Christ. Although types and shadows are similar in certain respects, they are like human faces in that they not only share similarities, but also differ from each other. Types are mainly persons or things that signify Christ, whereas shadows mainly refer to rituals and practices in the Old Testament that portray Christ. A **figure** mainly refers to a situation that presents a certain picture. For example, the wandering of the children of Israel in the wilderness is a figure, a picture, of our experience in the Christian life today, which is often a life of wandering. The Passover is another figure. Although the Passover lamb is a type of Christ, the Passover itself is a figure depicting how Christ, our Passover, saves us from God's judgment and feeds us with what He is. Hence, the picture of the Passover is a figure of Christ.

Christ is so rich that He needs not only types, but also shadows and figures to portray Him. All the types, shadows, and figures of Christ in the Old Testament are descriptions, explanations, and definitions of what Christ is. We need to study all these matters in the Scriptures in order to know the riches of Christ.

The riches of Christ are also seen in **prophecies**. In the Bible the first prophecy concerning Christ is Genesis 3:15, a verse which predicts that Christ as the seed of the woman will bruise the head of the serpent, Satan. This implies that Christ had to become a man born of a virgin, for He was to be the seed of woman. Christ is not the descendant of a man; He is the seed of a woman. This one verse reveals much of the riches of Christ. The riches of Christ are also seen in the **fulfillment** of the prophecies. Sometimes in the fulfillment of a prophecy in the New Testament something further is added. For example, the Old Testament reveals that Christ will be the lamb. But in the Old Testament, Christ is never called the Lamb of God. Nevertheless, in the fulfillment of the prophecy regarding Christ as the lamb, He is called the Lamb of God (John 1:29). What an addition this is!

Plants also portray the riches of Christ. Grass, flowers, grains, and trees all depict Christ's riches. Christ is typified not only by trees and plants, but also by **animals**. The lamb, the cow, the eagle, the lion, and the dove are all types of Christ. In the Bible, a number of **minerals** also show forth the riches of Christ. Gold, silver, brass, and precious stones, for example, typify Him.

We have pointed out that a number of **persons** in the Bible typify Christ. All these depict different aspects of Christ's riches. We see certain riches of Christ in Adam, others in Abel, and others in Joseph. Throughout the Bible, many other persons portray different aspects of the riches of Christ. All the **positive things** in the universe point to Christ. For example, Christ is the real gravity. Without Him, we would drift away. If Christ did not hold us in place, we would not be able to stand. Christ is the One with the true holding power. According to Hebrews 1:3, He upholds the entire universe. The riches of Christ also include both **human virtues** and **divine attributes**. Christ is the real love, patience, and forgiveness. Apart from Christ, we cannot love, be patient, or forgive, not even in relation to our wife or husband. But when we have Christ, we have all the human virtues and divine attributes.

All the riches of Christ are for the producing of the church. This takes place through the divine dispensation of Christ into the believers. The church is produced not by teaching, nor by organizing, but by the dispensation of Christ. The more Christ is dispensed into us, the more life we have, the stronger life we have, the richer life we have, and the more uplifted the church life becomes. I love the ministry that dispenses the riches of Christ into the believers. By means of such a ministry, we have a proper, strong, uplifted church life. The riches of Christ produce the church through the believers' experience and enjoyment of Christ. On Christ's side, it is a matter of dispensation, but on our side, it is a matter of experience and enjoyment. When we experience and enjoy the very Christ who is dispensed into us, we become part of the proper church life.

The riches of Christ also **express God's multifarious wisdom** (3:10). God's wisdom is manifold; it has many aspects in many directions. This wisdom is expressed before the rulers and authorities in the heavenlies, mainly before the evil powers of Satan. God desires to demonstrate to the powers of Satan how wise He is. Thus, the riches of Christ display His wisdom in a multifarious way. This is according to God's eternal purpose (3:11).

The experience of the riches of Christ results in the fullness of Christ, the Body as Christ's expression (1:23). The book of Ephesians speaks both of the riches of Christ and of the fullness of Christ. A tall, husky man is the fullness of America because he has enjoyed the riches of American foodstuffs. Throughout the years of his growth and development, he has consumed a great deal of meat, poultry, vegetables, and fruit. Therefore, as a full-grown man, he becomes the fullness of America. The riches of American foodstuffs did not make him this fullness until he ate them, digested them, and assimilated them. By absorbing the riches in this way, the riches became part of him. Likewise all the aspects of the riches of Christ do not become the fullness of Christ until they are eaten, enjoyed, digested, and assimilated by us. By absorbing these riches in such a way, we become the Body of Christ as His fullness to express Him. Thus, the Body of Christ is constituted of the riches of Christ that have been enjoyed and assimilated by us. Therefore, the Body is the result, the issue, of the experience and enjoyment of the riches of Christ.