

WEEKLY FELLOWSHIP

August 4, 2013

The Weekly Newsletter of the Church in Irvine

Prayer Items

- ✿ Croatia and Serbia
- ✿ Europe
- ✿ Irvine

For additional details regarding the above prayer items, please refer to Detailed Prayer Burdens.

Bible Reading

	OT Pages	NT Page
Monday	1852-1853	874
Tuesday	1854-1855	875
Wednesday	1856-1857	876
Thursday	1858-1859	877
Friday	1860-1861	878
Saturday	1862-1863	879

Morning Revival

The Completing Ministry of Paul, Week 3
(Memorial Day Conference 2013)

DETAILED PRAYER BURDENS

International: The Lord's move in Croatia and Serbia

The Lord is continuing to move in Croatia and Serbia. Between the two countries the Lord has gained about 40 brothers and sisters who desire to follow the ministry and the churches in the Lord's recovery.

- ✿ Please pray that Lord will continue to sow the seed of the ministry in Croatia, Serbia, and the remaining countries of former Yugoslavia and will raise up lampstands in many cities.

Continuing distribution of ministry publications and shepherding of seeking ones in Europe

- ✿ Please pray for the continuing distribution in Europe of the New Testament Recovery Version and other free ministry publications in English, French, German, Portuguese, and Spanish.

- ✿ Please pray for the shepherding of the seeking ones and their entering into the church life.

Irvine:

- ✿ Pray that a fresh and controlling vision of God's economy would be imparted into all the saints through the current HWMR on *The Completing Ministry of Paul* that we would live a daily life of being filled with Christ unto all the fullness of God.
- ✿ Pray that the commission to announce Christ and to enlighten men to see the economy of the mystery would be carried out in every district.

MINISTRY PORTION FROM THE LIFE-STUDY OF GENESIS

THE TWO TREES

In the foregoing messages, we have covered God's eternal purpose and some of the points regarding God's way of fulfilling His purpose. God's way of accomplishing His purpose was firstly to create man as a vessel to contain Himself as life and then to place him in a garden before the tree of life, indicating that God's intention was for man to partake of the fruit of this tree. However, along with the tree of life, Genesis 2:9, 17 mention the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Therefore, we need to consider very carefully the significance of these two trees.

Allowing Man to Have Free Choice

Although God wanted man to eat of the tree of life, He did not force him to do it. Neither did God put the tree of life into him. Instead, God gave man free will. He gave him freedom of choice. When mothers feed their infant children, they seem to force the children to take the food. Nevertheless, the baby still has free will, for often he refuses the food that has been put in his mouth. The mother wants her child to eat, but she must recognize that he has a free will.

God created man with freedom of choice. Why did God do this? God is great. He is not small. Only a small man forces people to accept his opinion. If you compel others to take your way, it proves that you are a small person. If you are a great man, you will never force people to accept you. You will always give

them a choice, saying, "If you love me, you may take me. If you do not care for me, you are free to forget about me." No man who is great or honorable will coerce people. Likewise, God is great. He is so attractive as the God of glory. God did not place man in front of Him exclusively, thus compelling man to choose Him. He placed man before two trees, confronting him with a choice.

When I was a young Christian, I was bothered by this. I said, "Why did God put man into such a dangerous situation? If I had been God, I would have removed the tree of knowledge of good and evil. I would have left the tree of life, placed man in front of it, and built a high protective wall to keep him safe. Why didn't God do this? Why did God put the tree of knowledge of good and evil in the garden as a temptation? Every problem comes from this source. Why didn't God take it away? If He had removed this tree, it would have saved us a great deal of trouble." I was not the only one who had these questions. Many young people asked me the same thing. However, if God had not given man a choice, He would have forced him to take the tree of life. God is too great to do such a thing. God is honorable and attractive. In order to display His greatness and prove His attractiveness, He needs the second tree.

According to the book of Job, Satan, the adversary of God, accused Job to God. He

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Church-related Websites

General: churchinirvine.org
 Blog: members.churchinirvine.org
 Calendar: calendar.churchinirvine.org
 Offerings: offerings.churchinirvine.org
 YP: youngpeople.churchinirvine.org

This Week

4 TH Lord's Day	☉ 9:30am–12:00pm Lord's Table and prophesying meetings by districts
6 TH Tuesday	☉ 7:30–8:30pm Prayer meeting by districts
8 TH Thursday	☉ 10:00–11:00am Sisters' prayer meeting at Hall 1
9 TH Friday	☉ Evening Small groups in the homes
10 TH Saturday	☉ 8:00–9:00am Corporate prayer time at Hall 3
11 TH Lord's Day	☉ 9:30am–12:00pm Lord's Table and prophesying meetings by districts

seemed to say, “Why does Job worship You? He worships You only because You bless him. If You take away all these blessings, Job will forsake You and renounce You to Your face” (Job 1:9-11). In other words, Satan told the Lord that He was bribing Job to worship Him and that if He did not bribe him, Job would forsake Him. Thus, Satan was slandering God as well as Job. God seemed to answer Satan, “Do as much as you can. I only command you to spare his life. I will prove to you that Job has not been bribed, but that he has been attracted by Me. Job worships Me out of his own free will.”

God is the same today. He never forces anyone to accept Him. When the Lord Jesus came, He did not coerce people into following Him. He presented Himself to people, but always respected their freedom of choice. The Lord seemed to say, “If you like Me, you may take Me. If you don't like Me, you may forget about Me.” Some of us may feel that we have been compelled by the Lord's mercy to believe in Him. To a certain extent, I feel the same way. His mercy has conquered us, persuading us to receive Him. Nevertheless, I can testify strongly that if you force me to reject Him, I will still take Him. I will never give Him up. Why have there been so many martyrs throughout the centuries? The Lord God stayed away, allowing His people to make a choice, that the actual situation might be proved to His enemy. God seemed to say, “Do your best, Satan. My people still choose Me.” Our brother Watchman Nee was imprisoned for twenty years, from 1952 until his death in 1972, where he was tested and tempted. He never changed his choice because his Lord was too lovely and too attractive. We have received the Lord Jesus, not because we have been forced or pressed, but because we have been called by His glory and attracted by His virtue (2 Pet. 1:3). We all can confess that regardless of what people might offer us, we would never renounce the Lord Jesus. Our Lord is too dear, too precious, and too attractive. We have made Him our unique choice.

The same principle operated in the garden of Eden when God placed Adam before the two trees, which denoted two sources. God wanted man to choose Him as the tree of life.

The Tree of Life Signifying God

The tree of life was a symbol, signifying God as the proper source (cf. *Psa.* 36:9; *John* 1:4; 10:10b; 11:25; 14:6; 1 *John* 5:12; *Col.* 3:4). If we only read *Genesis* 2, we will be unable to understand the meaning of the tree of life. However, the *Gospel of John* reveals the life denoted by the tree of life in a concrete way.

John 1:4 says, “In Him was life,” and *John* 15:5 tells us that the Lord Jesus is a vine tree. If we put these two verses together, we will realize that Christ is the tree of life. Jesus, the embodiment of God, is the tree of life. Therefore, the tree of life in *Genesis* 2 is a symbol of God as the source of life.

Besides this source, there is another tree, another source in the universe—death. However, this tree is not called the tree of death; it is called the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. There is such a tree in this universe. These two trees oppose one another, the tree of life denoting God as the source of life, and the tree of knowledge signifying Satan as the source of death. As God is the source of life, Satan is the source of death. Therefore, in *Genesis* 2 we find two sources signified by two trees.

Throughout the course of this life-study, we have pointed out several times that nearly everything in *Genesis* 1 and 2 is a seed of the divine revelation. The two trees are such seeds. Along with all the other seeds sown in *Genesis* 1 and 2, these seeds grow in the following books of the Bible and are reaped as a harvest in the book of *Revelation*. In *Revelation* 20:10, 14 we see that death is cast into the lake of fire. In *Revelation* 22:2 we see that life abides in the New Jerusalem. At the beginning of the Bible we find death and life, and at the end of the Bible we again see death and life. Between the two ends of the Bible two lines are set forth—the line of death and the line of life. Both lines begin in the book of *Genesis* and end in the book of *Revelation*. Death begins with the tree of knowledge of good and evil and ends with the lake of fire. Life begins with the tree of life and ends at the New Jerusalem. Before we were saved, we were on the line of death. After we were saved, we were put on the line of life.

Its Contents, Nature, and Result

The first of these two choices was the tree of life, which denoted God Himself as life. The content of the tree of life is life. It is life, simply, purely, and absolutely. The nature of this tree and the result of this tree are also life. Life is the content, nature, and result. Everything is life. (*Life Study of Genesis*, Message 12)