

WEEKLY FELLOWSHIP

January 5, 2014

The Weekly Newsletter of the Church in Irvine

Prayer Items

- ⊗ Literature distribution in Nordic countries
- ⊗ UCI and IVC

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

Weekly Truth Pursuit

Life-Study of Colossians, Messages 31 & 32

Bible Reading

	OT Pages	NT Page
Monday	217-218	994
Tuesday	219-220	995
Wednesday	221-222	996
Thursday	223-224	997
Friday	225-226	998
Saturday	227-228	999

Morning Revival

"Material Offerings and the Lord's Move Today," Week 1

DETAILED PRAYER BURDENS

International: Literature distribution in the Nordic countries (Sweden and Norway)

An initial distribution of the English New Testament Recovery Version in the two countries resulted in more than 60 Bibles given out and a total of 19 who want further contact.

- ⊗ Pray for the follow-up with those who want further contact.
- ⊗ Pray for a continuation of the distribution in both countries in the coming days and weeks and for the raising up of the Lord's testimony throughout the Scandinavian countries.
- ⊗ Pray for all the saints in these countries to be brought into a normal life of fruit-bearing as branches of Christ for the Lord's increase in Scandinavia.

Local: UCI and IVC

- ⊗ Pray for the continued gospel labor and shepherding of students at UCI and IVC as the new quarter and semester begin this month.
- ⊗ Pray for those involved in this labor and for those being contacted and cared for, that the Lord will have an increase of Himself for His testimony from these campuses.

MINISTRY PORTION

COMPLETING THE WORD OF GOD

We have pointed out that Paul's intention in the book of Colossians is to complete the word of God. This was his main purpose in writing this Epistle. In 1:25 and 26 Paul says, "I became a minister according to the stewardship of God, which was given to me for you, to complete the word of God, the mystery which has been hidden from the ages and from the generations, but now has been manifested to His saints." These verses indicate that the word of God completed by Paul is the mystery now manifested to the saints. Furthermore, according to verse 27, this mystery is Christ in us, the hope of glory. The goal of this mystery is to produce the church.

At the time the book of Colossians was written, Judaism had been in existence for centuries, and the church had come into being. Nevertheless, even though the church had come into being, the word of God had not yet been completed. Paul was troubled by the situation at Colosse. The Jewish and Gentile believers were neglecting Christ and the church; they were focusing their attention on such things as Judaistic observances and heathen philosophy. Many people, Jews and Christians alike, claimed to know God and to worship Him. However, Christ was being neglected and the genuine church life was being set aside. Therefore, Paul wrote the Epistle to the Colossians in order to complete the word of God.

In principle, the situation today is the same as that in Colosse at the time Paul wrote to the Colossians. Judaism and Christianity have been on earth for centuries. Although the

Jews have the Old Testament and the Christians have the entire Bible, very few people truly are experiencing Christ for the proper church life. Christ is still neglected, and the church life is still ignored. Hence, there is still the need for the word of God to be completed in a practical way.

What is the completion of the word of God, the completion of the divine revelation? In simple terms, to complete the word of God is to experience Christ subjectively and to enjoy Him in our daily living so that the proper church life may come forth to express God. This revelation is the completion of the word of God.

Christians today are involved in many different kinds of work for the Lord. But where is the experience of Christ, and where is the practice of the church life? Paul knew that neither Judaism nor any other religion could fulfill the desire of God's heart. God's desire is to have the church life produced through His people's personal experience of Christ. God wants an organism, the Body of Christ, brought forth through the experience of Christ. At the time of Paul, there were many Jews and a good number of Christians as well. But as Paul considered the situation, he could have asked, "Where is the experience of Christ, and where is the church to fulfill the desire of God's heart?" We should ask the same questions today.

EXPERIENCING CHRIST

We need to admit that we ourselves are short of the experience of Christ. We have

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Upcoming Events

☉ Friday, Feb. 14 - Lord's Day, Feb. 16,
International Chinese-speaking Con-
ference, Anaheim, CA

Church-related Websites

General: churchinirvine.org

Blog: members.churchinirvine.org

Calendar: calendar.churchinirvine.org

Offerings: offerings.churchinirvine.org

YP: youngpeople.churchinirvine.org

This Week

5TH ☉ 9:30am–12:00pm Lord's
Lord's Day Table and prophesying
meetings by districts

7TH ☉ 7:30–8:30pm Prayer meet-
Tuesday ings by districts

9TH ☉ 10:00–11:00am Sisters
Thursday prayer meeting at Hall 3

10TH ☉ Evening Small groups in
Friday the homes

12TH ☉ 9:30am–12:00pm Lord's
Lord's Day Table and prophesying
meetings by districts

MINISTRY PORTION (CONT'D)

(Continued from page 1)

been enlightened to see that God does not want anything other than Christ for the church life. However, in our experience we are still short of Christ. This means that, in a very practical sense, we also are short of the completion of the word of God. We lack Christ for the producing of the church. We know that only one thing matters—Christ for the church. However, we are still short of Christ. Before we can minister Christ to others, we need to minister Him to ourselves. In order to do this, we need to spend more time pray-reading and fellowshiping concerning the book of Colossians. If we do this, we shall begin to experience the riches of Christ contained in this book. Then we shall begin to have the adequate experience of Christ for the proper church life.

Because the Colossians did not have the adequate experience of Christ for the church life, things other than Christ crept into the church. It is the same among Christians today. God's people have some knowledge of the Bible, and they know God to a certain degree. But very few experience Christ as the life-giving Spirit in a living and practical way in their daily life. It is crucial that we have the practical experience of Christ revealed in Colossians. We need to daily enjoy the preeminent and all-inclusive Christ who is the constituent of the new man. We all need to pray to have more real and living experience of Christ daily. If we experience Christ in our daily life, we shall have more to share of Christ in the meetings of the church. Eventually, the church life will be enriched through our experience of Christ.

THE PROBLEM OF CULTURE

The problem in Colosse was not sinfulness, as in Corinth; it was culture. Asceticism and philosophy are two of the leading products of culture. Uncultured people are wild, altogether without any form of asceticism. Furthermore, those of a low culture do not have philosophy. The more cultured people are, the more highly developed their philosophy is. The Greeks are strong in philosophy, whereas the Jews are known for their religious

observances. Most religious observances are related to the putting down of the flesh and to the suppression of the self. The church in Colosse was composed of both Greeks and Jews. With the Greeks the problem was philosophy, but with the Jews the problem was religious practices. This indicates that various cultural practices had invaded the church life and pervaded it.

In 3:10 and 11 Paul says that in the new man "there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave, freeman, but Christ is all and in all." To say that there is no room for Greek and Jew means that there is no room for philosophy and for religious observances. If you compare Colossians 3:11 with parallel passages such as 1 Corinthians 12:13 and Galatians 3:28, you will find that only in Colossians does Paul mention barbarian and Scythian. The Colossian believers devoted much attention to matters of culture and did not want to be like barbarians or Scythians. Hence, Paul pointed out that in the church as the new man, there is no room for either the cultured or the uncultured. There is no place for philosophy, asceticism, or observances. In the new man Christ is all and in all. The new man is constituted of Christ, not with any element of culture.

The Colossians were not sinful like some of those in Corinth. However, the believers in Colosse replaced Christ, the constituent of the new man, with various aspects of culture. Some treasured philosophy, whereas others treasured religious observances. These things were allowed to come into the church life as substitutes for Christ. But in the new man there is room for nothing other than Christ.

—*Life-Study of Colossians*, Message 32

ANNOUNCEMENTS

☉ Hawaii Blending Conference

The saints in Hawaii have invited the churches to blend with them in a conference on Jan. 24-26. The churches in Hawaii endeavor to remain in the up-to-date ministry and in the blending life of the Body of Christ. They look forward to being blended together with saints from many different localities under the speaking of the ministry of the age. For additional information, please contact:
office@churchinirvine.org