

Guidelines for the Exercise of the Lord's Day Prophesying Message Three : Loving the Lord with the First Love, Enjoying the Lord as the Tree of Life, and Being the Golden Lampstand as the Testimony of Jesus for the Building Up of the New Jerusalem as the Goal of God's Eternal Economy

I. Overview:

In Revelation 2:7 the tree of life signifies the crucified and resurrected Christ, who is the tree of life for the nourishment and enjoyment of all God's redeemed people for eternity.

The churches in Ephesus had turned away from the apostle Paul's ministry and we see that approximately twenty-six years later, they had left their first love and lost the genuine enjoyment of Christ as the tree of life. The genuine ministry of the New Testament always stirs us up to love the Lord Jesus with the first love, strengthening us in the simplicity of eating and enjoying Christ as the tree of life for our life supply. Eating the tree of life, that is, enjoying Christ as our life supply, should be the primary matter in the church life; we may eat Him for our enjoyment and be constituted with Him for God's expression. The Lord's recovery is a recovery of loving the Lord Jesus with the first love, and of eating the Lord Jesus as the tree of life for the building up of the organic Body of Christ as the goal of God's eternal economy. To enjoy Christ as the tree of life, we must take the only way by loving Him with the first love, having a new contact with Him to enjoy His present presence day by day.

II. Truth and Enlightenment:

Day 1 —

A. Expound what the tree of life in Revelation 2:7 signifies.

In the Bible the tree of life always signifies Christ as the embodiment of all the riches of God for our food. Here it signifies the crucified and resurrected Christ, who today is in the church, the consummation of which will be the New Jerusalem, in which the crucified and resurrected Christ will be the tree of life for the nourishment of all God's redeemed people for eternity.

B. Explain Paul's word in 2 Corinthians 11:2.

Paul told the Corinthians that he was jealous over them with a jealousy of God. He went on to say that he had betrothed them to one husband in order to present them as a pure virgin to Christ. Paul's word touches our heart in a deep way and stirs up our love for the Lord Jesus; the tender feeling within you for the Lord Jesus is stirred up, and you realize afresh how dear and precious He is.

Day 2 —

A. Explain Ephesians the phrase in love, which is rich in feeling, being used repeatedly.

The church in Ephesus was rebuked by the Lord because she had lost her first love toward Him. The church, which is the Body of Christ, is also the bride of Christ, Christ's wife. With the Body, the emphasis is on taking Christ as life; with the wife, the emphasis is on loving Christ. The book of Ephesians started in the love for the Lord and ended also the same.

B. State the meaning of the phrase in love in Ephesians 1:4.

Ephesians 1:4: "Even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world to be holy and without blemish before Him in love." In love could also be joined with the first phrase of verse 5: predestinating us unto sonship. Thus, in love in verse 4 could modify God's choosing of us, our being holy and without blemish before God, or God's predestinating of us.

Day 3 —

A. Testify what exercise in the morning we, who love the Lord, should have.

When we wake up in the morning, the first thing we should do is say, "O Lord Jesus, I love You. O Lord Jesus, I love You." How intimate, how sweet, and how affectionate this is! Quite often I would not do some things, not merely because they are not right or because I fear God but because I love Him. I would say, "Lord Jesus, I love You, so I cannot do this."

B. Expound how to experience the first love.

The first love is the love that is God Himself. In the Bible we are told that God is love. In the whole universe, only God is love. The Lord charges the husbands to love their wives. But it is impossible for the husbands to love their

wives in themselves because we are not love. There is only one person who is love—God. God is not only the best but also the first.

Day 4 —

A. Expound enjoying Christ being the primary matter in the church life.

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.

B. Explain how to be saved by the conditions of the church in Ephesus.

In such a good, orderly, and formal church like the church in Ephesus, we need to first overcome the loss of the first love. The second thing that we need is 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.

Day 5 —

A. Expound that there is no other way to experience Him but by love.

Life is a person, and there is no other way to apply and enjoy this person but by love. We need to love Him. Some of the saints in past centuries used to pray, “Lord, show me Your love that I may love You.” We need to pray the same prayer. Once we see the love of Jesus, we will be so constrained, so captured, and so attracted.

B. Testify that as long as we love Him, He will lead us in everything.

Give yourself to love the Lord. No other way is so prevailing, and no other way is so safe, so rich, and so full of enjoyment. Just love Him. Do not care for anything else. As long as we love Him from the deepest part of our being, everything will be all right. If we need wisdom, He will be the wisdom to us. If we need power, He will be the power.

Day 6 —

A. To illustrate the Lord’s lovers in John 12.

We need to be a lover of the Lord Jesus all day long. This is why the most significant aspect of the miniature of the church life in John 12 is the love that poured the ointment upon the Lord. We all must love Him. His presence is always related to our love toward Him. The more we love Him, the more we enjoy His presence. What is His presence? It is simply the enjoyment of Himself.

B. Explain the blessings of His lovers from John 14:21-23.

When we believe in Him, the three of the Divine Trinity come to abide in us. But after we believe in Him and know that He is abiding in us, we need to love Him. We see the Son manifesting Himself to His lover and the Father coming with Him to make an abode with the Son’s lover. After the abiding of the Spirit in us, the Son will manifest Himself to His lovers.

III. Conclusion:

What the Lord requires of His local churches is the first love and the best love. If others come to our meetings and they only see that we are doing many things for the Lord, but they do not feel that we have a best love for Him, we have failed. What people must feel in our meetings is that we love the Lord first. Instead of focusing too much on ministry and labor, or anything else, we must focus on the first and best love for the Lord. Paul saw that the church life consists in our love for the Lord. Without this love, it is impossible to live the proper church life. Revelation 2 tells us that the failure of the church in Ephesus was that they lost their first love. By failing in this point, there is no position to enjoy Christ as the tree of life, and the lampstand is in danger of being removed from them. We need to love the Lord with incorruptible love.