

Intro: Stefan Duerksen, Lead Pastor **PRAY FOR OFFERING**

Church-Wide Prayer: 3. Next Gen: ❤️ Passion for Jesus, memorization & find identity in Christ

- Memorization challenge – pray for our youth to enjoy memorization – for God’s Word to be WRITTEN all over their hearts, brains, minds, and LIVES!
- Pray for our N.G. who struggle with mental health, addictions, purpose, and truth, to find their Identities IN Christ – to have their eyes opened to their value & worth.
- Pray for camp, staff, volunteers, campers – For Jesus to be glorified! Many “yes” given to Him!
- Pray Next Gen in persecuted countries & Israel – Passion for Jesus, Scripture, and discipleship.
- Pray for Christians in the Congo – 70 butchered this past week. Strength, comfort, hope!

Intro: We are in week 3 of our series on Revelation: Letters to the Church.

This is leading up to our Equipping Conference where P. Ray is going to focus on “THINGS TO COME.”

Are things really back to normal? Is normal good enough?

- Violent extremists using antisemitism to recruit in CANADA
- <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/csis-antisemitism-violent-extremists-1.7463398>
- **Email:** Canada continues to try and remove charitable status from Christian churches – **article:** Freeland says they will no longer check Muslim charities for ties to terrorists.
- <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/freeland-cra-rad-muslim-audits-1.7463471>
- Ontario court orders blogger to pay Trans couple 380K\$ for saying they were grooming kids at Trans story time.
- Canada - 100,000 babies are murdered through abortion each year.
- 1 in 20 deaths in Canada are from MAiD. And rising faster than any other country.
- <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c0j1z14p57po>
- Nearly 1 in 10 U.S. adults identify as LGBTQ
- <https://www.nbcnews.com/nbc-out/out-news/nearly-1-10-us-adults-identify-lgbtq-gallup-survey-finds-rcna192910>
- Trump just stated that Ukraine shouldn’t have started the war. They were invaded 3 years ago by RUSSIA.
- <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c9814k2jlxko>
- As the world cries fowl on ISRAEL – they are having to release MURDERERS to get CIVILIANS back from TERRORISTS. Those being returned from Hamas? Look like they came from concentration camps.
- This last week officials in Congo found the bodies of 70 Christians who were decapitated in a church in the northeast village of Kasanga.
- <https://youtu.be/UL-r1GVCvRE?si=-a58ZIE818OaHpYU>
- **Our own Joshua & Febe** we’ve been praying for as they bring CRI – the GOSPEL into parts of India!
- We have friends we are missionaries in the M.E. – we have to hide their identities – GOSPEL.
- Addictions & mental health numbers continue to climb. People report feeling isolated and alone.
- Christianity continues to SHRINK in the West – while we binge the latest series on Netflix.

QUESTION: Can you hear the war drums beating? Can you see the battle raging all around us? Eph 6 – do you believe that we are in a war?

Jesus warned of deception! HE WON'T BE WRONG. Have you ever considered that times of PEACE externally can be the most DANGEROUS time spiritually?

Daniel 9:27 – BEFORE the worst time in human history – Great Tribulation – what happens? A PEACE AGREEMENT.

Why? PEACE – or “normal” allows everyone to relax and put their guard down. E.g. Oct 7th Israel.

QUESTION FOR US: Are we awake? Or have we been lulled to complacency through an easy life.

(Mt 24) Jesus said “if the master knew when the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake!”

JESUS IS COMING SOON! EVIL HAS AN EXPIRATION DATE.

A. The Church in Ephesus

Where was Ephesus: Modern day Turkey Map

Historical significance:

- Ephesus was the fourth-largest city of the Roman Empire. (BEFORE/AFTER)
- In 96 A. D. the population of Ephesus was about 225,000.
- Ephesus was a major financial center, not only for Asia Minor but for the ancient world at large.
- This meant that people from many different nations ended up in Ephesus.
- Ephesus was home to the Pan-Ionian Games, surpassed in grandeur only by the Olympic Games held in Athens.
- Ephesus was proud to be the home of the worship of the mother goddess Artemis, as the Greeks called her, Diana, as the Romans called her. She was the fertility goddess, the embodiment of sexuality and the embodiment of sexual lust.
- Her temple in Ephesus was one of the Seven Wonders of the World. It was built on a platform measuring more than 100,000 square feet, twice the size of a football field.
- 11 It had 100 stone columns, made of marble, each 55 feet high. In 29 B.C. Ephesus became one of the centers for the worship of the goddess Dea Roma and a center for the emperor cult.
- Ephesus was known for Emperor worship – they had Temples to worship: Domitian, Vespasian, Hadrian.
- The city had an amphitheatre that could seat 24,000 people.
- **POINT: They were wealthy, modern, inclusive, and hyper-sexualized – SOUNDS LIKE US!**
- **In that center of business, politics and religious pluralism emerged one of the most influential churches in the history of Christianity.**
- *The above information is taken from: Johnson, Darrell W.. Discipleship On The Edge: An Expository Journey Through the Book of Revelation (pp. 53-57). Canadian Church Leaders Network. Kindle Edition.*

The Church of Ephesus

- **During Paul's 2 missionary journey 49-51 A. D.** The Ephesians church was born during a visit by the apostle Paul and Priscilla and Aquila. *Acts 18:2 meets Aquila and his wife, Priscilla.*

- **Paul left Priscilla and Aquila to help the young church in Ephesus.**
 - **Acts 18:18–21 (ESV)** ... with him Priscilla and Aquila. ... left in Ephesus
 - **Acts 18:24–26 (ESV)** Now a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was an eloquent man, competent in the Scriptures. He had been instructed in the way of the Lord. And being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John. He began to speak boldly in the synagogue, but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.
 - **Robert J** – *“Priscilla is put before Aquila, as in Ac 18:18 [see on Ac 18:18]; she being probably the more intelligent and devoted of the two)..... We see here also an example of not only lay agency (as it is called), but female agency of the highest kind and with the most admirable fruit. Nor can one help admiring the humility and teachableness of so gifted a teacher in sitting at the feet of a Christian woman and her husband.*
 - ¹ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, [*Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*](#), vol. 2 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), 205.
 - **Further ref to P&A: Rom 16:3; 1 Cor 16:19; 2 Tim 4:19; Acts 18:2, 18, 26.**
- **Paul spent two and a half years in the church (the longest period he spent in any one place).**
 - The story of the sons of Sceva trying to use Jesus’ name to do deliverance comes here.
- **Then a riot breaks out** – the trade smiths are angry with Paul for turning people away from their idol business – they drag Aristarchus and Gaius to the theater (Acts 19:21-41) here Paul is restrained from entering – they feared for his life!
- **In 60-62 A. D. Paul ends up in Rome** under house arrest. It is here that he writes the book of Ephesians.
 - **Ephesians 1:1 (ESV)** 1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints who are in Ephesus, and are faithful in Christ Jesus:
 - **Ephesians 1:15–16 (ESV)** For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, 16 I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers,
 - **The church is thriving at this point – persecution exists – but it’s minor.**
- **By 64 A. D.** Paul sends Timothy to “pastor” the church of Ephesus as **false teaching** was beginning to arise and cause problems in the church. (**1 Tim 1:3**)
- By the time of Revelation’s writing, Ephesus had become the center of the Christian movement;
- It would later move to Rome.
- **Fun Fact:** One of its long-time members was Mary, the mother of Jesus, having moved there with John, whom Jesus, from the cross, had asked to care for her. Can you imagine what it would have been like to worship on Christmas Eve with Mary in the congregation? Or, Communion?
- **What a church! Founded by the apostle Paul, nurtured by Priscilla and Aquila and Timothy, pastored by the apostle John, and home to Mary, the mother of Jesus.**
 - *Discipleship on the Edge, Darrell W. Johnson, pg 52-54.*

B. Letter to the Church of Ephesus

(PLAY VIDEO) Revelation 2:1–7 (ESV) 1 “To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: ‘The words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands. 2 “ ‘I know

your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false. 3 I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name's sake, and you have not grown weary. 4 But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. 5 Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent. 6 Yet this you have: you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. 7 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.'

- **What does Jesus have to say about this influential church?**
- **FIRST:** He is WALKING AMONG THE CHURCHES. Evaluating them.
 - **School Teacher** – grading our homework, assignments, preparing us for the FINAL EXAM
- **SECOND:** "I know your works" – Jesus evaluates His Church & His people. What does HE SEE?
 - Toil and patient endurance
 - They don't tolerate false teaching
 - Bearing up and enduring – they are suffering for the sake of Jesus' Name! and they haven't grown tired! They are pushing on and pushing through suffering! WOW!
 - They hated the deeds of the Nicolaitans! Religious sect leading people astray!

This was no ordinary church – she was the flagship church for a reason! Committed to orthodoxy! Willing to count the cost for discipleship!

- *John Stott's summarizing of the condition of the church—"energetic in their service, patient in their suffering, orthodox in their faith"*
- **REFLECT:** Are we church like this? Are these things true in your life?

BUT THIS I HAVE AGAINST YOU... Jesus looks through ALL the actions, busyness,

YOU HAVE LOST YOUR FIRST LOVE! (MOST IMPORTANT THING WE CAN DO)

- *He warns that failure to correct this fatal flaw will result in their lampstand being removed.*
- **What is first love?**
 - **TIME:** When I could talk on the phone for hours with Lou and not care about the time.
 - **MONEY:** Spending money on Lou? I LOVE IT!
 - **AWKWARD:** When I could lay awkwardly on a couch for hours watching Disney movies
 - **SPEECHLESS:** Tongue tied – but not able to stop thinking about her
 - **FIRST THOUGHT:** ...on my mind in the AM. Last thought on my mind in the PM.
 - **SERVING:** Serving her? Are you kidding! A joy!
 - **BECOME LIKE HER! I thought Lou liked Country music** – which I hated! Guess what? I became a Country fan overnight! And started buying Lou country albums
 - **CHANGE:** I have worked too hard to change the things about me that cause her pain.
 - **SUFFER:** I will (mostly) gladly suffer wrong for her.
- **THIS IS FIRST LOVE.**
- ***Revelation 2:1 (IVP NT Commentary)** Loss of your first love is not primarily the death of passion, as in a stale marriage, but the failure to maintain the commitment once made to help and serve one another. Here as everywhere in the Bible, love for God and love for one another are inseparable.*

- The Church in Ephesus – had SO MUCH success! They had fought a good fight! Stood firm on TRUTH! Resisted FALSE TEACHING! Endured hard things!
- BUT had lost sight of their LOVE FOR GOD & PEOPLE!
- **Matthew 24:11–12 (ESV)** And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. And because lawlessness will be increased, *the love of many will grow cold.*

QUESTION: Has your love for God gone cold?

C. Steps back to First Love (worship team up front and ready)

REFLECT: IF TODAY – YOU stood before Jesus and He gave you a report card – what would it say?

- **REMEMBER** – the first love you had when you first received Jesus!
- **REPENT** – turn from whatever you have given your heart to – treasure-!
- **DO** – the things you did at first!
 - i. When you had time for worship! Bible reading! Prayer!
 - ii. Church – small groups!
 - iii. Giving – serving!
 - iv. Helping those in need!

SPECIAL: The King is coming!

AFTER SERVICE PRAYER – PRAYER ROOM – 9AM and 11AM

MARANATHA!! Come soon Lord!

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SC CHURCH WIDE PRAYER REQUESTS 2024

Cruise ship → → → → → Battleship

- 1. Life on Mission:** Churchwide commitment to "Each One, Reach One"
- 2. Heart of Southland:** 500 people - Prayer Summit, Set Free! & Bible in a year
- 3. Next Gen:** ❤️ Passion for Jesus, memorization & find identity in Christ
- 4. Church Renewal:** Double funding, mentors & CRI Churches in Canada
- 5. Persecuted Church & Israel:** Salvation, hope & perseverance - MARANATHA