

VISION

- I. **For the joy set before Him, Jesus, the Author and Perfector of our faith, “endured the cross, despising the shame” —Heb. 12:2:**
- A. The Lord loved the church and gave Himself up for her—Eph. 5:25.
 - B. On the cross the Lord offered Himself as the sacrifice for sins, bearing the sins of many, being made sin for the believers, casting out the ruler of this world and judging this world, and as a grain of wheat, falling into death for the release of the divine life—Heb. 9:28; 1 Pet. 2:24; 2 Cor. 5:21; John 12:24, 31.
 - C. Colossians 2:15 portrays the warfare that took place at the time of Christ’s crucifixion:
 - In His crucifixion Christ was working to accomplish redemption, and God the Father was working to judge sin.
 - At the same time the rulers and authorities were busy in the attempt to frustrate the work of God and Christ—Col. 2:15.
 - The rulers and authorities are evil angels, fallen angels that are subordinates of Satan working for him—Eph. 2:2.
 - While God was judging sin, the evil rulers and authorities were present and were very active, swarming around the crucified Christ, pressing in very closely—Col. 2:15:
 - If they had not pressed in closely, God could not have stripped them off.
 - The words stripping off indicate that the rulers and authorities were very close, as close as our garments are to our body.
 - In stripping off the rulers and authorities, God made a display of them openly, putting them to shame and triumphing over them in the cross—Col. 2:15.

EXPERIENCE

- II. **The joy set before us is the Lord Jesus, the Bridegroom, coming for His bride, who has made herself ready—Rev. 19:7-9:**
- A. The MATURITY of the bride—Rev. 19:7-9; Eph. 4:13-15:
 - The readiness of the corporate bride depends on the maturity in life of the overcomers—Rev. 19:7; Heb. 6:1; Phil. 3:12-15; Eph. 4:13.
 - To be transformed is to be metabolically changed in our natural life, whereas to be matured is to be filled with the divine life that changes us—Heb. 6:1.
 - B. The BUILDING of the bride—Matt. 16:18; Eph. 2:21-22; 4:15-16:
 - God’s building is the desire of God’s heart and the goal of God’s salvation— 1:5; Exo. 25:8; cf. 1:11; 40:2-3, 34-35.
 - The goal of the Lord’s recovery is to recover Christ as life and everything to us so that we may be built up—Eph. 3:8; 4:16.
 - God’s building is the corporate expression of the Triune God—1 Tim. 3:15-16; John 17:22; Eph. 3:19b, 21.

II. (Cont.):

C. The **RIGHTEOUSNESS** of the bride—Rev. 19:7-9; Matt. 5:20; 22:11:

- As our subjective righteousness, Christ is the One dwelling in us to live for us a life that can be justified by God and that is always acceptable to God—Matt. 5:6, 20.
- The living that is right with both God and man must be God as our expression in our daily living—2 Cor. 3:9; Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10.
- Christ lived out of the saints as their subjective righteousness becomes their wedding garment—Rev. 19:8.
- The wedding garment in Matthew 22:11-13 signifies the Christ whom we live out and who is expressed through us in our daily living as our surpassing righteousness—Matt. 5:20; Rev. 3:4-5, 18.

D. The **BEAUTY** of the bride—Eph. 5:25-27:

- As the bride, the church needs beauty; the beauty in Ephesians 5 is for the presentation of the bride.
- The beauty of the bride comes from the Christ who is wrought into the church and who is then expressed through the church—Eph. 3:17a:
 - Our only beauty is the shining out of Christ from within us.
 - What Christ appreciates in us is the expression of Himself.

E. Ephesians 6 and Revelation 19 reveal that the church as the bride must also be **A WARRIOR** to defeat God's enemy:

- Spiritual warfare is a matter of the Body; we are a corporate army fighting the battle for God's interest on earth—Rev. 17:14; 19:14; cf. 2 Tim. 2:4.
- In Ephesians 5 the word is for nourishment that leads to the beautifying of the bride, but in Ephesians 6 the word is for killing that enables the church as the corporate warrior to engage in spiritual warfare—Eph. 6:17-18.
- Christ will come as a fighting General with His bride as His army to fight against Antichrist at Armageddon—Rev. 19:11-21.
- The wedding garment—Christ lived out of us as our daily righteousness— qualifies us not only to attend the wedding but also to join the army to fight with Christ against Antichrist in the war at Armageddon—Matt. 22:11-12; Rev. 19:7-8, 14.

III. “The joy of Jehovah is your strength” —Neh. 8:10c:

A. According to Nehemiah 8:10, the joy of our Lord is our strength:

- It is not a matter of our having strength; His joy upholds us—1 Thes. 5:16.
- The Lord's joy has nothing to do with circumstances; He rejoiced in God's will; there was joy in knowing and doing God's will.
- We should not try to copy the Lord but receive the joy of the Lord:
 - We can have something of the Lord imparted to us.
 - We can have the joy of the Lord; His joy will be our strength.

B. At the end of his life Watchman Nee said, in the midst of his sufferings, “I maintain my joy” —Watchman Nee—a Seer of the Divine Revelation in the Present Age, p. 182.

C. *I maintain my joy* indicates that he was practicing the word of the apostle Paul in Philippians 4:4: “Rejoice in the Lord always.”

D. Through the mercy and grace of God, may we all be able to maintain our joy by the joy of the Lord as our strength.

I. **For the joy set before Him, Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of our faith, “endured the cross, despising the shame”**

[Heb. 12:2] Looking away unto Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down on the right hand of the throne of God.

- The Lord loved the church and gave Himself up for her. On the cross the Lord offered Himself as the sacrifice for sins, being made sin and bearing the sins for the believers, casting out the ruler of this world and judging this world, and as a grain of wheat, falling into death for the release of the divine life. In His crucifixion, while Christ was working to accomplish redemption, and God the Father was judging sin, the evil rulers and authorities, subordinates of Satan, were very active and pressing in around the crucified Christ very closely, attempting to frustrate the work of God and Christ. God stripped them off, displaying them openly, putting them to shame and triumphing over them in the cross. [Eph. 5:25] ... even as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her. [Col. 2:15] Stripping off the rulers and the authorities, He made a display of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

II. **The joy set before us is the Lord Jesus, the Bridegroom, coming for His bride, who has made herself ready**

[Rev. 19:7] Let us rejoice and exult, and let us give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.

- The **MATURITY** of the bride—The readiness of the corporate bride depends on the maturity in life of the overcomers. While transformation is to be metabolically changed in our natural life, maturity is to be filled with the divine life that changes us. [Heb. 6:1] Therefore leaving the word of the beginning of Christ, let us be brought on to maturity, ...
- The **BUILDING** of the bride—God’s building is the desire of God’s heart and the goal of God’s salvation, recovering Christ as life and everything to us so that we may be built up as the bride, the corporate expression of the Triune God. [Eph. 2:21-22] In whom all the building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling place of God in spirit.
- The **RIGHTEOUSNESS** of the bride—As our subjective righteousness, the indwelling Christ live for us a life that can be justified by and is always acceptable to God; expressing Him in our daily living that we may be right with both God and man. Christ lived out of the saints as their subjective righteousness becomes their wedding garment, their surpassing righteousness. [Rev. 19:8] And it was given to her that she should be clothed in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteousness of the saints. [Matt. 22:11-12] But when the king came in to look at those reclining at table, he saw there a man who was not clothed with a wedding garment, And he said to him, Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment? And he was speechless.
- The **BEAUTY** of the bride —As the bride, the church needs beauty, which comes from the Christ who is wrought into the church and who is then expressed through the church by the shining out of Christ from within us. In Ephesians 5 the word is for nourishment that leads to the beautifying of the bride. [Eph. 5:26-27] That He might sanctify her, cleansing her by the washing of the water in the word, That He might present the church to Himself glorious, not having spot or wrinkle or any such things, but that she would be holy and without blemish.
- Ephesians 6 and Revelation 19 reveal that the church as the bride must also be a **WARRIOR** to defeat God’s enemy—Spiritual warfare is a matter of the Body; we are a corporate army fighting the battle for God’s interest on earth using the word of God as in Ephesians 6, beyond using it for nourishment to beautify the bride as in Ephesians 5. Christ will come as a fighting General with His bride as His army to fight against Antichrist at Armageddon. The wedding garment—Christ lived out of us as our daily righteousness—qualifies us not only to attend the wedding but also to join the army to fight with Christ against Antichrist in the war at Armageddon. [Eph. 6:17-18] And receive the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which Spirit is the word of God, By means of all prayer and petition, praying at every time in spirit and watching unto this in all perseverance and petition concerning all the saints,

III. **“The joy of Jehovah is your strength”**

- According to Nehemiah 8:10, it is not us having strength but the joy of our Lord upholds us and is our strength. The Lord rejoiced in God’s will; He has joy in knowing and doing God’s will regardless of the circumstances. We can have the joy of the Lord not by imitation but through His dispensation; that His joy will be our strength.
- At the end of his life Watchman Nee said, in the midst of his sufferings, “I maintain my joy” indicating that he was practicing “Rejoice in the Lord always” according to Apostle Paul in Philippians 4:4. Through the mercy and grace of God, may we all be able to maintain our joy by the joy of the Lord as our strength. [Neh. 8:10] ...This day is holy to our Lord. And do not be grieved, for the joy of Jehovah is your strength. [1 Thes. 5:16-18] Always rejoice, Unceasingly pray, In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

Even regardless of how tired I am, I feel fine whenever I come to a meeting. There is no tiredness. I am so strengthened by the meeting. I am enriched, I am healed, I am uplifted by the meeting. Why? The joy of the Lord is our strength, and this strengthening joy is also a healing. The medical doctors would tell you that one of the best medicines is joy. If you could be joyful all the day long, you would not be sick so much. The most pleasant time is the meeting time.

According to typology, the church is a people meeting. Without the meeting life there is no church life. You may have the church in terminology, but you do not have the church in living reality. The living reality of the church is the meeting life. Hallelujah! We are churching. We are not only meeting; we are churching.

<Excerpts from "Experiencing Christ as the Offerings for the Church Meetings", Chapter 3, "Meeting to satisfy God with Christ">

Our Lord "endured" and "despised" because of the joy of the kingdom. How about us? Brothers and sisters, have we ever left anything for the glory of the kingdom? Have we ever quit doing what we wanted to do or done what we did not want to do for the sake of the prize from God? If this joy captured our Lord, can it not capture us? Many saints, in ancient times as well as today, left all they had for the sake of the kingdom's glory and followed Jesus. How about us?

If we are willing to consider the Lord Jesus and examine His experience, we will not give in in this way. Gideon and his three hundred men were "faint, yet pursuing" (Judg. 8:4). We ought to be "faint, yet running."

May we all be persons who run the race. May we all be running until the end. Even if we are hurt, offended, misunderstood, and rejected while running, we still have to cheer up and run the race unwearily for the sake of the Lord Jesus. Who receives the most praises in a race? It is the one who is hurt, who rises up again, and who finally wins the first place. This person will surely receive unceasing praises. Therefore, being hurt and suffering are not a problem; even failing is not a problem. The one who falls down and rises up again is still the best runner. Brothers and sisters, today we are all in the race. Nothing counts today; everything will receive its final judgment at the end of the race. We should not give up, become weary, or faint in our soul for any reason. We ought to look unto Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of our faith and run the race set before us!

<Excerpts from "Collected Works of Watchman Nee, The (Set 1) Vol. 17: Notes on Scriptural Messages (1) (W. Nee)", Chapter 25, "Running the race that is set before us">