

Christ

Life

MINISTRIES

REPORT

JANUARY - APRIL 2004 VOLUME 27 NUMBER 1

When the Lights Go Out in the Church!

The Tragedy of Spiritual Blackout

The worst power blackout in U.S. history occurred in August, 2003. It began in the Midwest and before it was over it affected eight states and Canada. Millions were without power. The nation's largest subway shut down for thirty-two hours. Auto-maker assembly plants and factories shut down. New York City alone lost 750 million dollars in revenue. At least three people died. While the outage did not last long, it was a major inconvenience for scores of people.

Although it was an extraordinary church, Ephesus was facing a spiritual blackout (Rev. 2:1-7). Born in the midst of revival, the Ephesian church had a *great beginning*. So many idolaters repented that the idol maker's trade fell off. The entire city was in an uproar when Paul was dragged into the town square, being blamed for the economic downturn!

This highly privileged church had *great teaching*. Paul invested three years of his life teaching the Ephesian believers.

They also had *great leaders*. Apollos, the silver-tongued orator is believed to have pastored this church. Timothy was probably their pastor for a season also. Aquila and Priscilla were congregational pillars at Ephesus.

Ephesus was the type of church that you would be thrilled to be associated with. While their past was glorious, their future was in jeopardy. This active, busy church had a problem, and God was threatening to turn out the lights!

The Savior's Recognition

It was a SAVED Church (v.2). These people had come out of paganism after being miraculously saved. The Lord Jesus, Who held the seven stars in His right hand, said, "I know thy works." This was a bonafide church that God had put His approval upon. A church is called out group of baptized believers assembled together for evangelism, edification, and the exaltation of Jesus Christ. God had called, saved, and blessed them. Ephesus was a regenerate church.

But it was also a SERVING Church. He Who walked in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks observed their service for He said, "I know . . . thy labor." The word "labor" means intense toil. They had served to a point of exhaustion. Like Old McDonald's farm, they had "*Here a work, there a work, everywhere a work, work!*"

In addition, Ephesus was a STEADFAST Church. The Lord

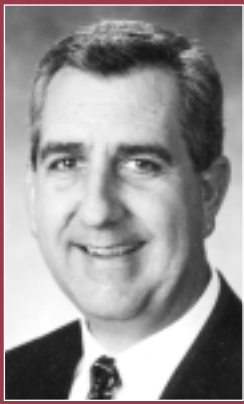
commended them for their "patience" which speaks of steadfast endurance. These folks did not quit when they faced trials and hardships. They bore up under the burden and pressed on even when the load was heavy.

Besides this it was a SOUND/ SEPARATED Church. Ephesus could not bear evil people. They exercised discipline on false apostles. They may have been patient in trials, but they were not patient with compromise. Rather than fellowshipping with the unfruitful workers of darkness, they reprovved them!

Furthermore they were a SOULWINNING Church (v.3). For Christ's name's sake they "labored" to make Christ known. Wesley said, "We have only one business on earth – to save souls." That pagan city had been mightily impacted for God. Ephesus was owned of God – He put his name there! Multitudes had been saved through their witness.

Moreover Ephesus was a SUFFERING Church. The all-seeing eye of God recognized their perseverance under affliction. They had not "fainted" under stress.

Jesus took account of their virtues and commended them. He never even



Personal Word

The churches listed in Revelation 2-3 were literal churches. Down through the centuries there have been local churches which resembled them.

The church at Ephesus is a potent reminder of the potential disaster when the *means to an end* become an *end* in themselves. The things they once did to glorify Christ were still being done. Only now the things they were doing were no longer expressions of love — merely duty.

It is scary to think that a church which had so much light and blessing was in danger of having its candlestick removed. Let this be a sober reminder and warning to your soul.

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The Christ Life Report is the official publication of Christ Life Ministries, Inc. CLM is a 501-c-3 non-profit organization. It exists exclusively for furthering revival and evangelism in local churches.

The major emphasis of this ministry are four-fold: crusades, publications, Prayer Advances, and The Report. Evangelist Harold Vaughan is the founder of CLM.

Christ Life Ministries is a faith ministry. All contributions are tax-deductible.

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hinted that they should retreat from their noble qualities. All of these things were good, but they were inadequate. A spiritual blackout was about to take place. God was threatening to turn the lights off!

Being saved could not keep the lights on! Serving could not keep the lights on! Steadfastness could not keep the lights on! Separation could not keep the lights on! Soul winning could not keep the lights on! Suffering could not keep the lights on! By today's standards this looks like a perfect church, but all these things together could not keep the lights on. We may not see everything, but the Lord does not miss a single thing. This well-taught, working church was in trouble with God.

The Savior's Rebuke

There was no immorality, no heresy, or ecumenical compromise in the church. What could they be guilty of that caused God to threaten their continued existence? It states in verse 4 that they "left" their "first love." This word left means to *forsake* or *abandon*. It does not say they had "lost," but they had left their first love.

New Jersey was having so many children murdered by their parents that they implemented a policy of No Name, No Blame, No Shame. A social worker told me that any parent could drop off their unwanted child at a hospital or police station and they were free to walk away forever. No Name, No Blame, and No Shame! Parents who exercise this option have not accidentally *lost* their children — they have intentionally *left* their children!

Ephesus left Christ. In doing so, these incredibly blessed believers had forfeited their vital reality. Their spiritual vitality had vanished. Somehow they had become cool toward Christ.

A couple had lost their seven

year-old daughter. The mother was broken hearted. Their family doctor and husband thought adopting a child might help. The grieving mother agreed as long as the child resembled her daughter. When the man and woman arrived at the orphanage, the director had picked out 12 blue-eyed, blonde haired little girls. The mother selected one and asked all to leave so she could speak to the little girl in private. She spoke tenderly to the frightened little girl as she sat on the piano bench. As she spoke, she told the little girl about her departed daughter and asked, "Would you like to come home with me and be my little girl?" She continued, "If you come to our house you can have anything you want; your own room, a pony, dolls, pretty dresses, and plenty of toys."

The little girl sat silent with her head bowed. The mother continued to plead and promise. She even told her about an upcoming trip to Europe. Finally the little girl raised her eyes, filled with unshed tears, and said, "If I come and be your little girl, and you give me all these things, what do you want me to do?" The mother sprang forward and hugged the little girl. Weeping she said, "Honey, all we want you to do is just love us."

What God wanted from Ephesus was their love. The first love is Christ Himself. The driving force behind any church that goes on with God is genuine love for Christ! *Every day with Jesus is sweeter than the day before. Every day with Jesus I love Him more and more!* Ephesus could no longer sing that song. Good churches can lose out with God. Ephesus had become mechanical. In externals they were dead on, but on the inside they were dead. The heart was gone. Yes, they were still doing the right things, but for the wrong reason. Routine orthodoxy had replaced vitality. The curse of institutionalism had set in.

A four year-old was hugging a doll

in each arm. She looked up at her Mom and said, "Mamma, I love them and love them, but they never love me back." God has demonstrated His love for you. Do you love Him back? Andrew Murray said, "The best part of Christian work is the part which only God sees." First love is the best part, and this is what Ephesus had left.

The Savior's Renunciation

Tom Bodett, in the Motel 6 commercial, says, "We'll leave the light on for you." God in essence said to Ephesus, "I'll cut the lights out on you!" Verse five states, "I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent." This was SERIOUS. If the candlestick was removed, it would cease to be a church. God was challenging them to repent, lest He remove His presence. Ephesus had left its first love and was in danger of losing its life.

It was not the devil who was going to put them out of business – it was God Who threatened to put them out of business. The devil was not going to turn off the lights – God was. It is one thing to be at odds with the devil. It is quite another thing to be at odds with God. We would expect the devil to fight against a church like Ephesus, but who would anticipate God shutting down such a high caliber church?

The imminent power outage was because they had left their first love. Take heed, there is no such thing as eternal security for a local church! A good past does not guarantee a bright future.

The Savior's Remedy

The only thing that could keep the lights on was a recovery of what had been lost. The three R's of revival are: Remember, Repent, and Repeat.

REMEMBER. "Thus saith the LORD; I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness" (Jer. 2:2). God remembered when Israel loved and followed Him. Now He is challenging them to recall the times when they had fervently loved Him.

A grandfather came up to our table in the restaurant with his granddaughter in his

hands. He held her in a manner so as to show off this little girl. He was so proud of her that he spoke with ease and enthusiasm about her. It was evident to all that he was absolutely infatuated with his granddaughter. Can you remember the time when you felt toward Christ like that grandfather felt about his granddaughter? The path to restoration begins when you remind yourself what Christ has done for you. There are times when it is imperative to recall the blessings God has given you. In a period of declension you need to reminisce over the glory days when you were first saved – those days when you could not wait to pray; when you obeyed every prompting of the Holy Spirit; when your witness was fresh and not mechanical; when you could talk of Christ out of the overflow; when everything was a new and thrilling experience.

REPENT. Calling to mind better days is but the first step. God gave the Ephesian church an ultimatum – Repent or Else! You cannot repent too soon because you do not know how soon it will be too late. God's work requires haste and a backslidden heart calls for immediate self-humiliation. Biblical repentance is urgent and thorough.

It may cost you a lot to put a thing right, but it will cost you more to leave it wrong! What could be worse than losing the presence of God?

William Gurnall said, "Esau wept because he lost the blessing, not that he sold it." He was not concerned with what he had done – he was upset at the result. The repentance God accepts is genuine sorrow that we have forsaken Christ.

REPEAT. "Do the first works." When you don't know what to do – do what you know. "This is love, that we walk after his commandments" (2 John 6). Do what you did in the beginning.

A trained nurse will sit up all night with a sick patient because she gets paid for it. But a mother will sit up all night with her child because she loves her child. First works are an expression of love, not an obligation. Fellowshiping with God, feeding on the Word, and fasting are means to warm your heart up for God.

It was nearly one o'clock in the morning when the phone rang in the Winters' home. Dr. Leo Winters, a highly acclaimed surgeon in the Chicago area, was suddenly awakened. A young boy had been critically injured in an accident. "Couldn't somebody else handle it?" asked the doctor. This time his hands were possibly the only ones in the city, or maybe in the whole region, which were skilled enough to save the boy. He chose the quickest route to the hospital that night which happened to go through a rough area of town. He almost made it through the roughest part of town. As he was waiting at a stop light, suddenly his car door was jerked open by a man in a grey hat and dirty, red flannel shirt. "I've got to have your car!" the man screamed, pulling the doctor from his seat. Dr. Winters tried to explain the gravity of the situation to the man, but he was not listening. He pushed Dr. Winters away and drove off in his car. For forty-five minutes the doctor looked for a telephone. It had been over an hour when the taxi finally got him to the hospital. He burst through the doors in the nurse's station, but the nurse on duty shook her head. "Too late." The boy died thirty minutes earlier. The nurse said, "His father got here just before he died. He is in the chapel now. He is awfully confused. He could not understand why you never came." Hurriedly, Dr. Winters walked down the hall. Quietly, he entered the chapel. At the front he saw a kneeling, huddled form of a man weeping. As he drew near he saw the father was wearing a grey hat and a dirty, red flannel shirt! When the father hi-jacked the doctor's car, he voided the only chance of his son being saved. He had pushed away the only person that could have helped his boy.

Ephesus left (pushed away) its first love – have you? There is nothing wrong with you or your church that a first love renewal won't fix.

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

Men's Prayer Advance, January 29-31

Don't miss this tremendous opportunity to get away for three great days of revival preaching, hearty singing, and praying! What better way to begin the New Year? Godly men from Ireland and America will be bringing the Word to us.

This Advance will be held at the fabulous Rock Alum Springs Conference Center near Lexington, VA.

View the on-line brochure at www.christlifemin.org and register today!



Brother Ed Mohr leading worship time at MPA

Ladies' Prayer Advance, March 18-20

Spiritual progress demands "an intense narrowing of all our interests on earth and an immense broadening of all our interests in God" said Oswald Chambers. Mary, who sat at Jesus' feet, intentionally narrowed her earthly interests in order to broaden her interests in God. The Ladies' Prayer Advance is a dedicated time for this precise purpose.

Carol Trahan, who did a great job last year, will be back along with Pastor Mike Aylestock. This year the Ladies' Advance will be at the Rock Alum Springs Conference Center in Goshen, VA (right off I-81).

View the on-line brochure at www.christlifemin.org and register today!



Carol Trahan speaking

Youth Prayer Advances 2004

Are you looking for a ministry which treats young people like young adults? Are you desirous to get your people away from entertainment and under strong, Word-centered preaching? Do you want your young people to live holy lives? If you answered "Yes" to these questions, then you should take a look at the Youth Prayer Advances. The Youth Prayer Advance is a spiritual boot camp where young people receive "industrial strength" truth relating to the practical issues in our day.

Plans are to be back in Montebello, VA next August 5-7 for the Virginia Advance. This remote setting, under the "Big Top" in the Blue Ridge Mountains, has been a great blessing to many. Pastor Craig Scott from Colorado is the featured speaker.

Evangelist Ron Comfort, and his staff at Ambassador Baptist College, has opened the door once again for the second YPA South. The dates for this Advance are August 12-14. New dorms are under construction and the air conditioning is great! Evangelist Will Galkin will be preaching.

Brochures for these Advances will be available soon.



Song Time at YPA South

Couples' Advance Strikes a Cord

Couples came from as far as Arizona to hear Dr. Jim Binney at the Couples' Advance in October. The preaching was extraordinary, challenging, and biblical.

Session titles were: Three Steps to Permanent Change Part 1 & 2; Blessed Are the Merciful; Remembering the Love of Christ Part 1 & 2; How Do I Forgive?; Developing A Personal Theology of Sexuality (Men's Session); and How To Keep Your Kids On Your Team (by Terry Johnson).

All eight recorded sessions are available in an attractive album for \$38 postpaid. Make checks payable to Christ Life Ministries.



Session at Couples' Advance

Through the Bible in 2004

The Time with God journal is an excellent tool to help get your people in the Word daily. Pastors and youth pastors are utilizing *Time with God* as a means of discipleship. The reading schedule directs your people to read through the entire Bible in just one year.

Quantity discounts are available. Call today at 540-890-6100 for information and pricing!



John Phillips Commentaries — Half Price Sale!!

Looking for some great expository preaching resources? Dr. John Phillips is a master preacher and communicator. His commentaries are a goldmine for preachers!

Psalms Volume 1	Retail \$34.99	Our Price \$17.49
Psalms Volume 2	Retail \$34.99	Our Price \$17.49
Proverbs Volume 1	Retail \$32.99	Our Price \$16.49
Proverbs Volume 2	Retail \$32.99	Our Price \$16.49
Exploring the Future	Retail \$26.99	Our Price \$13.49
Exploring the Scriptures	Retail \$18.99	Our Price \$9.49
Acts	Retail \$29.99	Our Price \$14.99
1 Corinthians	Retail \$25.99	Our Price \$12.99
2 Corinthians	Retail \$24.99	Our Price \$12.49

Add \$5.00 for shipping (USPS) and handling (any size order).
Quantities are limited!

Feedback

We thank God for all the evidence of His blessing, for the good response in the meetings and for how you were enabled to present the very practical aspects of living a holy life.

In our weekly prayer meeting following the special weekend many testified in prayer to God's blessing in their lives during the meetings.

Many thanks again in our Savior's Name. We shall continue to remember you and your family in prayer in all your work for the Lord.

— Ireland

Spiritual **LIFE** **Crusade**

January 10-15

Brookside Baptist Church
Brookfield, WI

January 18-21

Friendship Baptist Church
Huntsville, AL

January 29-31

Men's Prayer Advance
Goshen, VA

February 8-13

Victory Baptist Church
Boonsboro, MD

February 15

Brookhill Baptist Church
Roanoke, VA

February 26-29

People's Fellowship Baptist
Church
Rocky Mount, NC

March 7-10

Meadows Baptist Church
Walnut Cove, NC

March 18-20

Ladies' Prayer Advance
Goshen, VA

March 28-31

Central Baptist Church
Southington, CT

April 4-16

Australia

April 25-28

Berwick Bible Church
Berwick, PA

2004 Prayer Advance Schedule

Men's Prayer Advance, January 29-31

Ladies' Prayer Advance, March 18-20

Youth Prayer Advance (Virginia), August 5-7

Youth Prayer Advance (North Carolina), August 12-14

Contact us for brochures or visit our website at:

www.christlifemin.org

Office Building Update

A work crew from Keedysville, Maryland framed the interior building and installed a heat system. We are at the finishing stage and should be set up soon!



Framing New Building