

To my Church Family

July 2016

Dear brothers and sisters,

I'd like to ask you a rather strange sounding question, "Do you believe there are supernatural beings?" This question sounds strange because we are all Christians, so of course we believe God exists. Why ask the obvious? That's not my point. Bear with me and let me explain. I ask this question for a reason. We believe in Jesus, so of course we believe God exists, but do we believe evil spirits exist? By "evil spirits", I do not mean "ghosts"---what people become after they die, according to traditional Chinese beliefs. I mean the devil and evil spirits. If we believe that the devil does exist, how much do we know about his activities and tricks? The devil is Scripture tells us "not to give the devil a foothold" (Ephesians 4:27). Before the return of Jesus Christ, our adversary the devil is very active: he uses all his wiles to attack God's people, attack God's church and prevent the expansion of God's Kingdom.

Why am I asking this question? I hope brothers and sisters still remember what I said several months ago when our church expansion project was about to be launched: Again and again I called upon brothers and sisters to be careful. The devil would certainly not sit there and do nothing while our church went forward. The common tactic of the devil is to create conflicts among our brothers and sisters, destroy the mutual trust and respect in our midst. As the building project draws closer, the intensity of the attacks will increase. If he succeeds, our expansion project would be rudderless. In future no matter how grand the new building will be, it will be little better than an empty shell. Not only will God's Kingdom be unable to advance, the empty church building will be a laughing stock, bringing shame to the name of the Lord.

A number of years ago, a church I was shepherding started a building project. Everyone was very excited, eager to enter a new phase. Just at that time God used a Korean pastor to remind me to be alert because the enemy was sure to attack, hoping to break up the church and destroy the driving force behind the building project. That time, I was at a wedding banquet. Pastors from different churches were seated at the same table. A Korean pastor was to my right. He and I had many things to talk about, not just because we were both pastors, but also because I attended many Christian gatherings of the Korean troops stationed in Vietnam during the war. I met many Korean Christians and was very touched by how seriously they took their faith. Thus, the Korean pastor and I had many topics to talk about. Finally, our conversation focused on the church building project. I learned that this Korean pastor's church had just completed a building project so I asked his advice, hoping to get some pointers about building a church facility. He said, "The most important thing about a church building project is not the construction plans, nor the fund raising----it is the church's recognition of spiritual warfare. A building project can make or break a church: it can become an opportunity for the church to have a breakthrough in growth, or it can be the beginning of the church's division and downfall. Right after groundbreaking, we set up building project special prayer groups. Brothers and sisters took turns to watch and pray until the construction was completed. Though we experienced great challenges during the process of construction, there was never any division in the leadership and all the leaders had the trust and support of the congregation, because everyone was very alert to the spiritual warfare, prayed earnestly, and strove to keep our unity amid many different opinions. Please remember, a church building project is an intense spiritual battle. Everyone must watch out for the wicked schemes of the enemy and not let him cause dissension in the church. Pray. Let the Lord's power rest on you."

Brothers and sisters, once more I earnestly call upon you to organize prayer groups in different ways, or come to the Wednesday evening corporate prayer meeting and be watchmen for our church. Lift up in prayer the expansion project and the unity of our church in the days ahead. The enemy is attacking us relentlessly. From another viewpoint, we should be excited. Since the attacks are serious, the opportunity for our church growth ahead must be very big. Our church is at the cross road of a great breakthrough which will enable us to fulfill the mission that the Lord has entrusted us. Otherwise the devil would not bother to pay us any attention. Brothers and sisters, be steadfast; rise up and build. "Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:3) The Lord reminds us to be alert in prayer. May the words Peter spoke in the past become a reminder for all of us today, "Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings. And the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will Himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. To Him be the power for ever and ever. Amen." (I Peter 5:8-11)

Serving together with you in the Lord,

Pastor Calvin Tran