

**THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD  
IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE AND THE CHURCH LIFE**

(Friday—Second Morning Session)

Message Two

**Living the Kingdom Life by Living a Hidden Life**

Scripture Reading: Isa. 45:15; 37:31; Matt. 6:2-4, 5-15, 16-18; 14:22-23;  
Psa. 42:7; S. S. 4:12

**I. We need to learn from the pattern of the Lord living a hidden life in His going up to the mountain privately to pray—Matt. 14:23; cf. Luke 6:12:**

- A. The Lord did not remain in the issue of the miracle with the crowds (the miracle of feeding five thousand men, apart from women and children), but He went away from them privately to be with the Father on the mountain in prayer—Matt. 14:14-23:
  - 1. The Lord compelled the disciples to leave Him in order that He might have more time to pray privately to the Father—vv. 22-23.
  - 2. He needed to pray privately to His Father who was in the heavens so that He might be one with the Father and have the Father with Him in whatever He did on earth for the establishing of the kingdom of the heavens; He did this not in the deserted place but on the mountain, leaving all the people, even His disciples, so that He might be alone to contact the Father.
- B. We should treasure three phrases—*to be with the Father, on the mountain, and in prayer*:
  - 1. To pray with others is good, but often we need to pray by ourselves; when we pray with others, we cannot enjoy the Lord as deeply as when we pray to the Lord privately.
  - 2. Even the Lord Jesus told us that when we pray, we should shut our door privately and pray to the Father who sees in secret (6:6); then we have the sensation of how intimate He is to us and how close we are to Him.
  - 3. We have to learn to leave the crowds, our family, our friends, and the saints in the church to go to a higher level on a “high mountain”; we have to go higher, far away from the earthly things on a lower level; we need to get to a higher level, separated from the crowd, to be with the Father privately and secretly to have intimate fellowship with Him.

**II. The principle of the kingdom people is that they live a hidden life, not performing their righteous deeds before men—deeds such as giving (vv. 2-4), praying (vv. 5-15), and fasting (vv. 16-18):**

- A. Regarding each of the three illustrations, the Lord used the word *secret* (vv. 4, 6, 18); our Father is *in secret*, and He *sees in secret*; the kingdom people, as children of the heavenly Father, must live in and care for the Father’s secret and hidden presence.
- B. The kingdom people, who live in an emptied and humbled spirit and walk in a pure and single heart under the heavenly ruling of the kingdom, are not allowed

to do anything in the flesh for the praise of men but must do all things in the spirit for the pleasing of their heavenly Father.

- C. The effect of doing our righteous deeds in secret is that the flesh and the self are killed; if people in society and even in degraded Christendom are not allowed to make a show of their good deeds, they will not do them; the self loves to be glorified, and the flesh loves to be gazed upon.
- D. The saints who grow openly do not grow in a healthy way; we all need some secret growth in life, some secret experiences of Christ; we need to pray to the Lord, worship the Lord, contact the Lord, and fellowship with the Lord in a secret way.
- E. We should pray much yet not let others know how much we pray; if we pray every day without telling others or letting them know about it, it means that we are healthy and that we are growing.
- F. The kingdom people must have some experience of prayer in their private room, contacting their heavenly Father in secret, experiencing some secret enjoyment of the Father, and receiving some secret answer from Him—v. 6.
- G. Any time we exhibit ourselves in our righteous deeds, we are not healthy; such an exhibition greatly frustrates our growth in life.
- H. Our human life loves to make a display, a public show, but God's life is always hidden; a hypocrite is one who has an outward manifestation without having anything within.
- I. We can never practice living a hidden life in secret in our natural life; it is possible only in the divine life, the life that does not enjoy making a show; if we are serious about being the kingdom people, we must learn to live by the hidden life of our Father.
- J. The universe indicates that God is hidden, that God is secret; if we love others by the love of God, this love will always remain hidden.

### **III. "Surely You are a God who hides Himself, / O God of Israel, the Savior"— Isa. 45:15:**

- A. Believers may know God as the almighty One, as the righteous One, as the One full of grace and compassion, but as the One who hides Himself, He is unknown to them.
- B. God does countless things in the midst of His people and countless things in their personal lives, yet He conceals Himself:
  - 1. God likes concealment, but we like display; God does not crave outward manifestations, but we cannot be content without them.
  - 2. God was obviously with Elijah on Mount Carmel, but when God withheld His manifest presence, Elijah could not bear it—1 Kings 19:9-18:
    - a. God knew that Elijah wanted Him to be a God who would manifest Himself; he had not realized that God is a God who hides Himself.
    - b. God was not in the great and strong wind, He was not in the earthquake, and He was not in the fire; instead, God spoke to Elijah in a "gentle, quiet voice"—v. 12.
    - c. The fact that God spoke to Elijah in a gentle, quiet voice indicates that God was ushering Elijah into the New Testament age, in which God speaks to His people not by thundering but gently and quietly—cf. 1 John 2:27.

- d. Elijah said to God that he was the only faithful one left, but God very gently answered Elijah by saying that He had reserved for Himself seven thousand men who had not bowed the knee to Baal—1 Kings 19:18; cf. Rom. 11:2-5.
  - e. Elijah had reckoned the situation only with what he could see, but God is a God who hides Himself; He had secretly reserved for Himself seven thousand overcomers who had not bowed the knee to Baal; God's activity was so hidden that not even the prophet Elijah knew anything about it.
- C. We need to realize the hidden nature of God's working; we should not think that only mighty influences, great visions, and tremendous revelations are of God; God's surest work is done in the secret of our beings:
- 1. The more we serve the Lord, and the more we abide in Him, the more we realize that God is a very quiet God, so quiet that His presence is often undetected.
  - 2. His most intimate way of guiding us is so natural that we scarcely perceive He is guiding us at all, yet somehow we have been led; it is often by this quiet inward activity of God that we receive our greatest guidances.
- D. When the only begotten Son came for the purpose of declaring God, He hid Him in a human life—a human life whose appearance was “marred,” a human life that had “no attracting form nor majesty”—Isa. 52:14; 53:2:
- 1. He came from Galilee, an insignificant province, and from the town of Nazareth, a small town of which it was said by the Jews that no prophet or person of repute ever came from there—John 1:46; 7:52.
  - 2. Thus, when He appeared, people found it hard to believe that God was present in Him—they found it hard even to believe that He was a prophet of God, yet God was hidden within Jesus of Nazareth—cf. Col. 2:9.
  - 3. Also, Jesus of Nazareth belonged to a poor home and grew up to be a carpenter—a very ordinary carpenter, working in a very small way, until He was thirty; who would have ever thought that He was indwelt by the infinite God?
- E. If you study the Scriptures carefully, you will see that God has the kind of temperament that dislikes ostentation; He likes to work secretly rather than openly—Matt. 17:1-9; John 20:14-17; Luke 24:13-37; John 20:24-29; Isa. 39:2-8:
- 1. “Whom having not seen, you love; into whom though not seeing Him at present, yet believing, you exult with joy that is unspeakable and full of glory”; it is a wonder and a mystery that the believers love One whom they have not seen—1 Pet. 1:8.
  - 2. Since the resurrection of the Lord, the chief discipline for His followers has come along the line of knowing Him as a God who hides Himself.
  - 3. Everything of God's economy with Christ as its centrality and universality is not in the seen realm but in the unseen atmosphere and realm of faith—2 Cor. 4:13, 16-18; 5:7; Heb. 11:1; Eph. 3:17a; 1 Tim. 1:4b.
- F. When we are most conscious of impotence, God is most powerfully present—2 Cor. 12:9-10:
- 1. The God who hides Himself is at work within our lives, and He is working mightily.

2. Our responsibility is to cooperate with Him by responding to His voice within—that “gentle, quiet voice,” that voice that seems so much a part of our own feelings that we scarcely recognize it as a voice at all.
3. To that voice, registered in the deepest depths of our being, we must say Amen, for there, secretly and ceaselessly, the God who hides Himself is working.

#### **IV. Psalm 42:7 says, “Deep calls unto deep”:**

- A. Others can respond deep within to only what issues from deep within us; anything that is not from the depths will never reach the depths of others.
- B. The kingdom life is a life in the depths, a life that can “take root downward and bear fruit upward”—Isa. 37:31; cf. Acts 6:7; 12:24; 19:20.
- C. On the one hand, we need to allow Christ as the seed of life to take root deep in the soil of our heart as the good earth (Matt. 13:23); on the other hand, we, as living plants in Christ, need to take root deep in the soil of the all-inclusive Christ as the reality of the good land (Col. 2:6-7):
  1. The good earth signifies the good heart that is not hardened by worldly traffic, that is without hidden sins, and that is without the anxiety of the age and the deceitfulness of riches; we need to daily allow the Lord to deal with these things in our heart so that we can grow with the growth of God—v. 19.
  2. Because we have been planted in Christ as the reality of the good land, we need to take time to absorb Him (especially in our times with Him in the morning).
- D. While the sower sowed, some seeds fell beside the way, some on the rocky places, some into the thorns, and some into the good earth; this shows us four different ways for man to receive the word—Matt. 13:4-8, 18-23:
  1. The Lord Jesus tells us that among these different conditions, one is the rocky places; there is a little earth on the surface, but underneath there are rocks; when the seed falls into this kind of ground, it springs up quickly, but as soon as the sun comes out, it withers because of the lack of root—vv. 5-6.
  2. What is a root? It is growth that occurs beneath the soil. What are the leaves? This is growth that occurs above the soil.
  3. In other words, roots are the hidden life, whereas leaves are the manifest life; the trouble with many Christians is that, while there is much apparent life, there is very little secret life; in other words, there is the lack of a hidden life.
  4. If all your experiences are manifested, then all your growth is upward; there is no downward growth; if this is the case, you are a person who has only leaves without root, and you are on shallow ground.
  5. The Christian who parades all his virtues before men and who does not have anything in the depth of his being has no root; he will not be able to stand in the day of trial and temptation; may God work in us so that we can take root downward.
- E. We need deep experiences of Christ like that of the apostle Paul—2 Cor. 12:1-4:
  1. Paul was caught away to the third heaven and caught away into Paradise, but he did not divulge this experience until fourteen years later; Paul’s roots were deep beneath the soil.
  2. If we want to have Paul’s work, then we need to have Paul’s “root”; if we want to have Paul’s outward conduct, then we need to have Paul’s inner life; if we

- want to have Paul's manifest power, then we need to have Paul's secret experience.
3. This does not mean that we should not testify, but we must realize that many experiences need to be hidden—cf. 4:5.
  4. To be without root is to be without any hidden treasure; it is to be without any hidden life or hidden experiences; it is essential that some of our experiences remain covered; to uncover everything is to lose everything—cf. Isa. 39:2-8.
- F. Whatever secrets we have with the Lord must be preserved; only if He moves within us to reveal something, dare we reveal it; if He wants us to share some experience with a brother, we dare not withhold it, for that would be violating a law of the members of the Body of Christ, which is the law of fellowship:
1. We need to learn what the Body of Christ is and what the flow of life among the members is; but we also need to learn the need for safeguarding the hidden part we have before the Lord, the experiences of Christ that are not known to others.
  2. If our life has no depth, our superficial work will only affect other lives superficially; only “deep calls unto deep.”
- G. A pure and beautiful spiritual life is derived from inward, hidden, and uninterrupted fellowship with God; hence, “he will bud like the lily / And will send forth his roots like the trees of Lebanon” (Hosea 14:5); this kind of life is capable of bearing much fruit—vv. 5-7.
- H. In order to live a life in the depths, it is necessary to have direct and intimate fellowship with the Lord; Song of Songs 4:12 says, “A garden enclosed is my sister, my bride, / A spring shut up, a fountain sealed”:
1. At this point in her spiritual progress, the Lord's loving seeker has become a garden for Christ's private satisfaction.
  2. She is not an open garden but an enclosed garden; all that she has is for her Beloved's delight and for no one else.
  3. If today's believers would close up a little more and seal up tighter, their work would become more prevailing.
  4. May the Lord grant us grace and do a deeper work in us through the cross so that we may strike deep roots and live a hidden life in the depths to fulfill God's requirements and satisfy His heart.

### **Excerpts from the Ministry:**

#### **GOING UP TO THE MOUNTAIN PRIVATELY TO PRAY**

After performing the miracle, the Lord went up to the mountain privately to pray (Matt. 14:23; cf. Luke 6:12).

#### **Not Remaining in the Issue of the Miracle with the Crowds**

The Lord did not remain in the issue of the miracle with the crowds but went away from them to be with the Father privately on the mountain in prayer. If we go to a certain place and have a great success, would we leave right away, or would we remain in this big success to enjoy it? We need to see and follow the pattern of the Lord Jesus. He did not remain in the issue of the great miracle that He performed. Instead, He went up to the mountain privately to pray. The word *privately* is very meaningful. This means He did not let the people

know that He was going to pray. Otherwise, they would have followed Him. He went away from them to be with the Father privately in prayer. I like these three phrases: *to be with the Father, on the mountain, and in prayer*. We should learn from the Lord's pattern here by exercising to be with Him on the mountain in prayer. His looking up to heaven means that He had no trust in Himself. His going up to the mountain means that He wanted to be with the Father in prayer.

To pray with others is good, but often we need to pray by ourselves. When we pray with others, we cannot enjoy the Lord as deeply as when we pray to the Lord privately. Even the Lord Jesus told us that when we pray we should enter into our private room and shut our door and pray to the Father who sees in secret (Matt. 6:6). Then we have the sensation of how intimate He is to us and how close we are to Him. We have to learn to leave the crowds, our family, our friends, and the saints in the church to go to a higher level on a "high mountain." We have to go higher, far away from the earthly things on a lower level. We need to get to a higher level, separated from the crowd, to be with the Father privately and secretly to have intimate fellowship with Him. This is the significance of being on the mountain in prayer.

### **Asking the Father to Bless All Those Who Participated in the Enjoyment of the Issue of the Miracle**

We need to consider why the Lord Jesus went to the mountain right after this miracle. John 6:27 gives us the reason. This verse says that after performing the miracle, the Lord said, "Work not for the food which perishes, but for the food which abides unto eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you; for Him has the Father, even God, sealed." The Lord told the ones whom He fed not to seek the food that perishes but to seek the food that abides unto eternal life. I believe the Lord Jesus went to the mountain to pray in this way: "Father, I pray to You under Your blessing. Through Your blessing, You fed the five thousand, but Father, they are just seeking for the food that perishes. I do look unto You that You would bless them that they would seek the food that abides unto eternal life. Father, You know that I am Your sent One. Only I can give them the food that abides unto eternal life, but they do not know Me in this way. They know only that I can perform a miracle to feed them with physical food. But they do not know that it is only I who can give them food that is of the eternal life." I believe that the Lord prayed to bless them further in this way.

His going up to the mountain privately to pray indicated His asking the Father to bless all those who had participated in the enjoyment of the issue of the miracle that they would not be satisfied with the food that perishes but that they should seek for the food that abides unto eternal life and recognize that He was not only the Son of Man but also the Son of God who was sent and sealed by the Father and who could give them eternal life. When the five thousand were being fed by Him, they recognized that He was the capable Son of Man, but they did not realize that He was actually the Son of God who was not only sent but also sealed by the Father. He was the One who could give them the very bread that is related to the eternal life. For this reason He had another teaching in John 6. In John 6 the Lord revealed that He is the bread out of heaven, the bread of life. Eventually, He said that this bread is just His word. "The words which I have spoken to you are spirit and are life" (v. 63). John 3:34 says that He is the One who speaks the word and gives the Spirit not by measure. To know Him in this way requires a revelation, so He prayed for them privately on the mountain.

### **Receiving Some Instruction from the Father**

His going up to the mountain privately to pray also indicated that He wanted to receive

of the Father some instruction concerning how to take care of the five thousand people fed by His miracle.

In this crystallization-study of Matthew 14, we can see how much we need revelation from the Lord to see the intrinsic significance of His word. To see the miracle of feeding five thousand with five loaves and two fish is easy, but to know the deeper lessons that we have to learn from the Performer of this big miracle requires revelation. These lessons are intrinsic, deeper, and of life. To know the great miracle the Lord performed does not give us any life. We can only admire the Lord's outward doing. But to see all the detailed points concerning the lessons of life in order to learn from the Lord in His way of performing the miracle imparts life to us. We need to learn these living lessons from the Lord so that we can enter into the God-man living. (*The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1994–1997*, vol. 3, "The God-man Living," pp. 564-566)

### DEEP ROOTS

One principle in preaching and receiving the word is found in the Lord's parable of the sower. While the sower sowed, some seeds fell beside the way, some on the rocky place, some into the thorns, and some into the good earth. This shows us four different ways for man to receive the word. The Lord Jesus tells us that among these different conditions, one is the rocky place. There is a little earth on the surface, but underneath there are rocks. When the seed falls into this kind of ground, it springs up quickly, but as soon as the sun comes out, it withers because of the lack of root.

What is a root? It is growth that occurs beneath the soil. What are the leaves? They are growth that occurs above the soil. In other words, roots are the hidden life, whereas leaves are the manifest life. The trouble with many Christians is that, while there is much apparent life, there is very little secret life. In other words, there is the lack of a hidden life. You have been a Christian for a number of years, have you not? Then let me ask: How much of your life is hidden from view? How much is unknown to others? You stress outward works. Yes, good works are important; but apart from that manifest expression of your life, how much of your life remains hidden? If all your spiritual life is exposed, you do not have any root. Are all your virtues before God manifested before man, or is there something more that is unknown to man? If all your experiences are manifested, then all your growth is upward; there is no downward growth. If this is the case, you are a person who has only leaves without root, and you are on shallow ground.

In our Christian life it is necessary that we learn the meaning of the Body of Christ; we must learn to have a life of the Body. On the other hand, we must learn that the life given to each member of His Body by the Lord is distinctly individual. The measure that has been given to you personally by Him needs to be guarded; otherwise, it will lose its specific character and will be of no particular use to God. If that which has been specially committed to you is exposed, it will wither.

The discourse of the Lord Jesus on the Mount was most remarkable. On the one hand, He said, "You are the light of the world. It is impossible for a city situated upon a mountain to be hidden" (Matt. 5:14). It is open. On the other hand, He said, "When you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be in secret;...when you pray, enter into your private room, and shut your door and pray to your Father who is in secret" (6:3-4, 6). On the one hand, if you are a Christian, you must come right out into the open and make a public profession; on the other hand, there are Christian virtues that you should preserve from the public gaze. The Christian who parades all his

virtues before men and who does not have anything in the depth of his being has no root; he will not be able to stand in the day of trial and temptation.

We have been the Lord's children many years; may the Lord open our eyes and show us the extent to which our experiences have been hidden from public view. How much would be left if what is known by man was taken away? May God work in us so that we can take root downward.

### **DEEP EXPERIENCES**

Writing to the Corinthians, Paul said, "To boast is necessary, though indeed not expedient" (2 Cor. 12:1). He admitted that it was "not profitable" (Gk.) to himself to write what he wrote in 2 Corinthians 12. But for the sake of others he had to do it; he was obliged to speak of "visions and revelations of the Lord." Brothers and sisters, this should be our attitude also. Many of us cannot stand the test of visions and revelations; as soon as we have a little experience, we blow the trumpet, and everyone knows about it. Paul knew that it was of no profit to himself to mention the Lord's visions and revelations. Why then did he mention them? He was forced to do so because some doubted his apostleship, and there were problems concerning the foundation of the Christian faith.

Did Paul disclose all his revelations? Far from it. He wrote, "I know a man [who is himself] in Christ, fourteen years ago (whether in the body I do not know, or outside the body I do not know; God knows) such a one was caught away to the third heaven" (v. 2). He did not divulge this experience until fourteen years later. What depth there was in Paul! It would be a wonder if we could hide away something we received from God for seven years. But for fourteen years Paul never divulged his experience; for fourteen years God's church knew nothing of it; for fourteen years not one of the apostles had heard of it. Paul's roots were deep beneath the soil.

Some people would be inclined to say, "Paul, let us hear all about that experience of yours fourteen years ago. Tell us about your experience in the third heavens. It would be most helpful for us to know the whole story." But he said, "I know such a man (whether in the body or outside the body, I do not know; God knows), that he was caught away into Paradise and heard unspeakable words, which it is not allowed for a man to speak" (vv. 3-4). To this present day this experience of Paul's has not been uprooted; still no one knows about that experience.

Brothers and sisters, this matter of root is a matter of extreme importance. If you want to have Paul's work, then you need to have Paul's "root"; if you want to have Paul's outward conduct, then you need to have Paul's inner life; if you want to have Paul's manifest power, then you need to have Paul's secret experience. The trouble with Christians today is that they cannot keep any spiritual thing or any special experience undisclosed. As soon as they have a little experience, they have to tell it abroad. They live their lives before men; nothing is hidden within them. They do not have any root. May God show us Paul's experience, and may He lead us into having depth!

### **SUPERFICIAL LIVING**

In Isaiah 39 we are told that when the news of Hezekiah's sickness and recovery reached the Babylonian court, messengers were dispatched with letters and a present for Hezekiah. Hezekiah had been a recipient of the grace of God, but he was unable to stand the test of grace. God's Word says, "And Hezekiah was glad for them and showed them his treasury, the silver and the gold, and the spices and the fine oil, and his whole armory and everything which was found among his treasures" (v. 2). Hezekiah could not overcome the temptation



to display everything. He had just been wonderfully healed of his sickness and no doubt felt self-important and thought there were few people in the world who had had such a remarkable experience as he. After all, how many had been given such a marvelous sign at the time of their healing as the shadow on the dial of Ahaz going back ten degrees (Isa. 38:8, KJV)? In his elation Hezekiah displayed all his treasures. This means that he had not passed through the dealing of the cross. His natural life was not dealt with. It was apparent that all his roots were exposed. Whatever Hezekiah knew and whatever he had were known to the Babylonians. Because of this exposure, Isaiah said to him, "Hear the word of Jehovah of hosts: The days are coming when everything that is in your house and that your fathers have laid up as a treasure unto this day will be carried away to Babylon; nothing will be left, says Jehovah" (39:5-6). The measure in which we display things to others will be the measure of our own loss. The measure in our life that we exhibit before others will be the measure we give up in ourselves. This is a solemn matter, and it demands our attention.

Alas, so many people cannot forbear disclosing their experiences! They have to speak to their heart's delight. This is like Hezekiah opening up his treasures to others. A brother once said, "Many of the brothers fall sick, and when they recover, they give their testimonies. I wish I could develop some sickness—but not a fatal one—and that God would heal me; then I would have something to say at the next testimony meeting." This brother's motive for healing was to be able to give a testimony. He sought an experience in order to have something to talk about. Oh! This superficial kind of living brings grave loss to us; it rules out the possibility of spiritual progress.

#### TESTIFYING WITHOUT EXHIBITING

Then should we not bear testimony? Yes, we should. Paul did so, and multitudes of God's children from generation to generation have done so too. But bearing testimony is one thing; delighting in exhibiting one's experience is quite another. What is our object in testifying? Is it that others may profit or that we may have the pleasure of talking? The love of hearing one's own voice and the desire to be helpful to others are two totally different things. We testify because there is a problem, and we have to speak about it. A testimony is not an after-meal conversation piece. Many times while we gossip, spiritual riches leak away. When the Lord so leads, we should testify because we want to render help to others. Paul testified in 2 Corinthians 12, but he did not lightly disclose his experience fourteen years earlier. He hid his experience for fourteen years, and no one knew about it. Even when he talked about this experience, he did not disclose everything. He only mentioned the experience; he did not relate the whole story. He only mentioned the fact that he received a revelation and heard unspeakable words. He did not tell others the words that he heard. Even today, the third heaven is still a mystery, and we still do not know what it is like.

Brothers and sisters, what are our treasures? What are our gold, silver, spices, precious ointments, and precious things? What is our armory? We have to remember that gold is everything that is of God, and silver is anything that is related to the redemption of the cross. Spices are the results of our wounds, precious things are the things that relate to the kingdom, and armory is the Lord's work that we have received from God and from the Lord. All of these are not doctrines, biblical teachings, or theology. These are the things we have acquired through our fellowship with the Lord. When we fellowship with God, communicate with Him, and are dealt with by Him, we pick up many things. It is wrong to speak about them loosely. This does not mean that we should not testify. But we must realize that many experiences need to be hidden. Brothers and sisters, this is a crucial matter in the Christian life. Many spiritual experiences need to be hidden away and should not be exposed.

The Lord Jesus sometimes gave His testimony, but He was never talkative. It is one thing to give a testimony and another thing to be talkative. The Lord healed the sick and insisted that the story of the healing be kept secret. This charge is repeated again and again in the Gospel of Mark. Once the Lord told a certain person, “Go to your house, to your own people, and report to them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He has had mercy on you” (5:19). We may speak of the great things the Lord has done for us, but we must not publish these things abroad as items of news; this only exposes ourselves as being without any root. To be without root is to be without any treasure; it is to be without any hidden life or hidden experiences. It is essential that some of our experiences remain covered; to uncover everything is to lose everything.

Let us also remember that if we display all our treasure, captivity cannot be averted. Death and exposure go together, and spiritual dryness and exposure also go together. Even if we have to give a testimony, we must be like Paul, who boasted out of necessity “though indeed not expedient” (2 Cor. 12:1). Satan’s attack often comes at the time a man is exposed. Any kind of exposure opens us up to loss. Many people are healed of their sickness, and they testify for the glory of God. But many testimonies of healing are not for the glory of God but for the glory of one’s own faith. As a result, the sickness comes back. After these ones give their testimony once, they are attacked by the same thing again. This shows us that God covers those who cover their roots, and God does not protect those who disclose their roots; they will be exposed to attacks. If God wants us to testify, we still have to do it. But there are many things that ought to be hidden away. God protects what we hide before Him, and we enjoy it.

The same applies to our work. By His grace and mercy God has accomplished something through us, but remember that what He has accomplished is not a matter for advertisement or material for propaganda. If we expose the work of God, we will find that the touch of death comes upon it immediately, and the loss will correspond to the extent to which we expose ourselves. As soon as David numbered the children of Israel, death set in (2 Sam. 24). May God deliver us from this kind of exposure.

Whatever secrets we have with the Lord must be preserved. We can only move according to God’s instruction within us. Only if He moves within us to reveal something, dare we reveal it. If He wants us to share some experience with a brother, we dare not withhold it, for that would be violating a law of the members of the Body of Christ. One law of the members of the Body of Christ is fellowship. Once we suppress this law, the flow stops. We must be positive, not negative, and minister life to others. But if we are engrossed all day with ourselves and with our own things, this talkativeness and exposure opens us to assault from the enemy. I trust we shall learn what the Body of Christ is and what the flow of life among the members is; but I trust we shall also learn the need for safeguarding the hidden part we have before the Lord, the experiences that are not known to others. No root should be exposed.

As we extend ourselves deeper and take root downward, we will discover that “deep calls unto deep.” When we can bring forth riches from the depths of our inner life, we will find that other lives will be deeply affected. The minute our inner being is touched, others will receive help and be enlightened. They will know that there is something beyond their knowledge. When deep touches deep, deep will respond to deep. If our life has no depth, our superficial work will only affect other lives superficially. We repeat yet again—only “deep calls unto deep.” (*The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, vol. 37, “Deep Calls unto Deep,” pp. 37-44)