

VOLUME TWO

BASIC
ELEMENTS
of the
CHRISTIAN
LIFE

*W*ITNESS LEE &
WATCHMAN NEE

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Living Stream Ministry
Anaheim, California • www.lsm.org

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Mass-distribution Edition, August, 2003.

ISBN 0-7363-2214-0

See back page for local distribution information.

Published by:

Living Stream Ministry

2431 W. La Palma Ave., Anaheim, CA 92801 U.S.A.

P. O. Box 2121, Anaheim, CA 92814 U.S.A.

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PREFACE

This book is composed of three chapters, which present some basic elements of the Christian life.

This material has been published previously as three separate booklets: *A Time With the Lord* and *A Simple Way to Touch the Lord* by Witness Lee and *Deep Calls Unto Deep* by Watchman Nee.

CHAPTER ONE

A TIME WITH THE LORD

In his book on prayer, Andrew Murray tells of a question raised by the chairman at a ministers' conference: "Everyone here who prays thirty minutes every day, hold up your hand." Of that whole congregation, only one hand was held up! The chairman then asked all who prayed fifteen minutes daily to hold up their hand. Half the hands went up. When he asked who prayed five minutes daily, the remainder of the hands were raised. Is not this the situation among us today? We all must personally ask ourselves this question: "How much time do I spend daily with the Lord?" The most prevailing need among Christians today is to spend a certain amount of time every day reading and praying in the presence of the Lord.

In the physical realm we need to spend time daily to obtain physical nourishment by eating physical food. How much more time we need to spend to obtain spiritual nourishment by eating the spiritual food. According to the present situation nearly all Christians know how to study, memorize, meditate, and search the Scriptures for knowledge, but very few know how to come to the Word of God to enjoy the Lord and to receive spiritual nourishment.

As people who have God living within us, we need to set aside some time each day to come to the Word of God to enjoy Him, to feed upon Him, and to receive spiritual nourishment. From the experiences and testimonies of others, it is clear that we need to spend at least thirty minutes with the Lord each day to contact Him and be strengthened by Him. During this time we need *to read* and *to pray*, and this cannot be done adequately in ten minutes. A longer time is necessary in order to read and pray properly. Even half an hour for reading and

praying is too short, but surely we can spend half an hour with the Lord every day to pray-read His Word, and the best time for this is in the morning.

During this thirty minutes we must forget about knowledge, a message, a movement, or a work, etc. All this must be forgotten and our whole attention given to spending proper and adequate time in the Lord's presence. As sons of God this is the first and primary daily experience into which all Christians must be brought. For at least thirty minutes each day, we must learn not to exercise our mind too much, but simply to exercise our spirit in pray-reading. It is impossible for any Christian who spends less than thirty minutes daily in the presence of the Lord to be adequately spiritual and healthy. This is a fixed principle. Can anyone be healthy who does not eat daily?

If we will do this for a period of time, the Lord will work a great change in us. Our experience of Christ will be deepened, and eventually our influence toward others will be prevailing. The whole situation among us will be radically changed, not by teaching, studying, and exhorting, but by contacting the Lord.

We must pay the price to spend this time with the Lord for the sake of our spiritual growth. In the mornings we must not love to lie sleepily in our beds so long. Watchman Nee once told us that if we love our bed, we can never love the Lord. There is a real struggle with us all between choosing the Lord or choosing our bed.

If by the Lord's mercy and grace we desire and agree to spend more time daily in the presence of the Lord, what shall we do? By what means can we touch the Word of God for nourishment and enjoyment? We must learn to do only one thing—we must mingle our reading with our praying. We must contact the Lord by mingling our reading of the Bible with prayer, and by mingling our prayer with reading. This is why a new word, *pray-read*, has been used. We must *pray-read* the Word.

First, begin by spontaneously offering a short prayer to the Lord. Then open your Bible and start to read. While you are reading, spontaneously respond to the Lord with what

you read. Do not read too many verses, such as a long paragraph or a long section, before praying. While you are reading, respond to the Lord by praying.

Do not try to pray long sentence prayers, and do not pray for many things, asking the Lord to do something for you. Simply learn to *pray with the words you read*. The valuable prayer, the prayer which contacts the Lord, is to utter or express what is responding within you as you read the Word.

This thirty minutes daily should be spent not asking the Lord to do many things, but simply staying in communion with Him and enjoying Him. The more we enjoy Him, the more He will be pleased. If we ask Him to do this and that, He will say, "Foolish child, it is unnecessary for you to ask Me to do all those things. I can take care of that; you must only enjoy Me."

In the New Testament, the Lord Jesus speaks of God's Word as spiritual food: "But He answered and said, It is written, 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out through the mouth of God'" (Matt. 4:4). Every word which proceeds out of the mouth of God is spiritual food to nourish us. The Scriptures reveal at least three cases of those who ate the Word of God. One is Jeremiah, who said, "Your words were found and I *ate* them..." (Jer. 15:16). This statement is not according to our human concept. If it were not written in the Bible, we would never have thought that we must *eat* the Word of God. We might say that we must learn about the Word and study the Word. The most we would say is that we must receive the Word of God. But we would never use the word *eat*! Jeremiah *ate the word of God. This means he received the Word into him, assimilated it, and made it a part of himself.*

In the same verse Jeremiah also said, "Your word became to me the gladness and joy of my heart." This is a kind of enjoyment. The Word, after being eaten, became a joy and also a rejoicing. Joy is experienced within, and rejoicing is expressed without. God's Word is an enjoyment; after being taken into us and assimilated into our very being, it becomes joy within us and rejoicing without.

There are also a number of other verses which reveal this

same thought to us. David said, "How sweet are Your words to my *taste*! Sweeter than honey to my mouth!" (Psa. 119:103). The Word is an enjoyment, and it is even sweeter and more pleasant than honey to our taste. From all these verses we realize that the Word of God is not only for us to learn, but more for us to taste, to eat, to enjoy, and to digest.

Then in 1 Peter 2:2-3 we see that to eat the Word is to taste the Lord. "As newborn babes, long for the guileless milk of the word in order that by it you may grow unto salvation, if you have *tasted* that the Lord is good." In verse 2 there is the eating of the Word, and in verse 3, the tasting of the Lord. When we eat the Word of God as our spiritual nourishment, we taste the Lord. Therefore, like Jeremiah, we must eat the Word; then we will enjoy the Lord and receive spiritual nourishment.

Another important verse is 1 Timothy 4:6b: "You will be a good minister of Christ Jesus, *being nourished* with the words of the faith." Perhaps you have been in Christianity for many years. Have you ever thought that we must be nourished in the Word of God? As a rule, we always think that we must be "taught" in the Word, by the Word, and with the Word. But how many Christians have noticed the word *nourished*? And how many have ever heard a message stressing the importance of being nourished in the Word?

But the concept of the apostle Paul was that God's Word is food to nourish God's children. We must be nourished in the Word, not merely taught. Praise the Lord, nourished! Hallelujah, we must be nourished with the Word, not just taught with letters! Paul's emphasis is not that we should be taught with knowledge, but that we should be nourished with the riches of the Word.

What is our intention when we come to read the Scriptures? Has not our intention for many years been to know, to learn, or to understand something? Our concept has been that the Bible is a kind of teaching, a book full of doctrines. So we came to the Word, intending to understand and to know something. However, we should not just exercise our wonderful mind with our mysterious understanding to understand the Word of God. We must forget about this. We should not

appraise our mind and appreciate our understanding so much. We need to be blind men and even fools, simply coming to the Word to exercise our spirit to pray-read. Forget about the old, traditional way!

If we do not know how to pray-read, we will pray in the following way: first, we will rise early in the morning, feeling that we must pray. Then we will try to pray like this: "Lord, I thank You that You are so good...that You have given me peace...that You have protected me from all kinds of danger..." Then we suddenly remember that we are about to travel somewhere: "Oh, I am about to travel....Lord, grant me journeying mercies...the safety...from a car accident...." After further hesitation, we continue, "I have a friend in Vietnam... Lord, remember him...remember James in Vietnam...also Tom in West Germany...Lord, Tom is there...he needs Your protection...."

We must answer honestly. What does this kind of prayer do for us? This is the way most Christians pray. But do they receive any nourishment? Do they gain something which causes them to be full of joy within and rejoicing without? No!

The right way is this: first, come to the Bible to pray-read. There is no need to close your eyes. Keep your eyes on the Word as you pray. In all sixty-six books of the Bible we cannot find one verse which says that we should pray with our eyes closed. But there is a verse which says that Jesus looked up to the heavens, saying, "Father..." (John 17:1). He was looking at heaven while He was praying! We would not argue in a doctrinal way, but we must realize that there is no need for us to close our eyes to pray. Simply look at the printed page which says, "In the beginning...." Then with your eyes upon the Word and praying *from deep within* say, "O Lord, 'In the beginning!' Lord, I praise Thee 'in the beginning was the Word.' Although I do not know what the Word is, the Word was there. I praise Thee, Lord! 'In the beginning!' Hallelujah! 'In the beginning!' O Lord, 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.'" Simply try to pray in this way. Perhaps you will turn to another verse. "There is now then no condemnation." "O Lord, 'There is now no condemnation.' O Lord, 'Now no condemnation.' Amen.

'Now.' O Lord. 'Now.' Amen! 'Now no condemnation.' Praise the Lord! Hallelujah! 'No condemnation,' etc.

While we are pray-reading there is no need for us to compose any sentences or create a prayer. Just pray-read *the Word*. Pray the words of the Bible *exactly as they read*. Eventually, you will see that the whole Bible is a prayer book! Not only is the "Lord's Prayer" a prayer, but the whole Bible is a prayer. Open to any page, any line, any word of the Bible, and start to pray with that portion of the Word. If you will continue to pray-read in this way in the presence of the Lord for thirty minutes, you will see what kind of enlightenment, watering, nourishment, refreshing, strengthening, and satisfaction you will obtain. From these thirty minutes, you will have a spiritual breakfast which will last the entire day!

Although you may not understand a certain passage, you still are nourished, because there is really something of God in His Word. The Word of God is His very breath. (Second Timothy 3:16 in the Greek is, "All Scripture is God-breathed.")

Do not try only to learn the Bible. We must realize that this is a book of life, not a book of knowledge. This book is the divine embodiment of the living Spirit, and He is life. The right way is not just to study or learn, but to contact the Word by exercising our spirit to pray-read. Thousands have proven that this is the right way. This way of coming to the Bible has revolutionized their lives. If you would try it for five mornings, you also will be changed. Your whole concept about the Bible will be radically altered. It may not work so well at first, but with practice, you will touch the living Spirit.

What the church needs today is not more knowledge and teachings, but *nourishment*, and the way the Lord nourishes His Body is by His Word. The Lord is eagerly waiting for a way to nourish us and become our enjoyment. Pray-reading gives Him that way. By this kind of prayer all the riches of Christ will be brought into us and even wrought into us. No teaching, doctrine, or knowledge can work Christ into us to such an extent; it is only by this way of prayer. Therefore, we all must learn to pray in this way. Eventually, we will be brought out of ourselves, saturated with Christ, and permeated with the Spirit.

CHAPTER TWO

A SIMPLE WAY TO TOUCH THE LORD

In his Epistles Paul unveils to us clearly and emphatically the ultimate goal or objective of the Christian walk: “To know Him” (Phil. 3:10); “to me, to live is Christ” (Phil. 1:21); “Christ our life” (Col. 3:4). Through these verses we can see that the reality and central point of the Christian life is simply Christ Himself.

As people who have been born of God and have Christ living within them, all Christians must be brought by the Lord’s mercy to the point where they are no longer wholly caught up in studying about Christ, doing something for Christ, or even serving Christ, but rather are in the reality of touching and experiencing Him in a living way day by day. Romans 5:10 testifies, “For if we, being enemies, were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more we will be saved in His life.” This “much more” must be *more of Christ*. A Christian’s initial salvation experience is indeed wonderful. He is now one who has been born of God, but “much more” he is to be saved by the *life* of Christ. Every person who knows Christ as his Savior can and must be brought into this experience of “much more,” which is entering into the fullness and reality of a life wholly centered on Christ—experiencing, touching, and enjoying Him moment by moment.

ACCOMPLISHING REDEMPTION

Today the Lord has made Himself available to all Christians for them to contact and experience in a full and living way. The Bible reveals to us that in the beginning Jesus Christ was God (John 1:1). Then one day this very God

became a man to dwell on the earth (John 1:14) and to accomplish redemption for all. He was among us as the Lamb of God that through the shedding of His blood we might partake of redemption (Eph. 1:7) and be reconciled to God. This is indeed glorious! Christ became a man, lived on earth thirty-three and a half years, and accomplished redemption for all. However, if Christ had stopped here, this would be the summation of our Christian experience. All could enjoy forgiveness of sins, but none could be saved by His *life*. None could touch and experience Him in a daily, practical way. What then did Christ do that every Christian may enter into this “much more” experience? Was He *only* crucified and then buried? Was that the end? We must praise Him that there is much more!

A LIFE-GIVING SPIRIT

Shortly before His crucifixion He told His disciples that He was *among them* but that He was going to be *in them* (John 14:16-20). How could this be accomplished? If Jesus had only died and been buried and that was the end, He could never have entered into His disciples, nor could He enter into His people today. But, praise the Lord, that three days after His burial, He burst through the bonds of death and was raised from the dead. So let us ask the question: In what form is He today? He is the *Spirit*! “The last Adam [Christ] became a life-giving Spirit” (1 Cor. 15:45b).

Jesus had told His disciples that He would enter into them; therefore, shortly after His resurrection He appeared before them in a room in which the doors were closed. He could never have done this had He not been the Spirit. There, “He breathed into them and said to them, Receive the Holy Spirit” (John 20:22). At that moment Jesus, who had been among them and outside of them, came *into them*. Christ could never have entered into His disciples had He not been the Spirit. “The Lord is the Spirit” (2 Cor. 3:17), and all that have been reconciled to God have this *life-giving Spirit dwelling within them to be their bountiful supply and all they need*. Since Christ has become the Spirit and has entered into every Christian, He is now so available to them; He is so easy for

them to contact, experience, and even enjoy. "Much more we will be saved in His life."

CALLING UPON THE LORD

All this is indeed wonderful, the wonder of wonders, that Christ became a man, accomplished redemption for us, became the Spirit, and has now entered *into* us to be our life and everything to us; but the question we must now raise is this: How can *we* touch and experience Christ in a *practical* way as *our* very life moment by moment? The Lord has given us a *simple* way. All we have to do is call upon Him, and we will touch Him who is the life-giving supply. In Romans 10:12b-13 the Bible says, "For the same Lord is Lord of all and rich to all who call upon Him; for 'whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.'" In the past we may have had the concept that these verses were only applicable to an initial salvation experience; however, every Christian also needs a daily salvation from sin, self, human weakness, and other negative things. On the positive side he also needs a bountiful supply of the Lord to nourish and strengthen him in order that he may grow up into Christ in all things. The way into the realization of this is simply by calling on the Lord. He is rich to all who call upon Him. We see Paul in 2 Timothy 2:22 urging Timothy to live the Christian life with those who *call on the Lord* out of a pure heart.

The Christian's experience of Christ as purposed by God is to be real to the believer and a testimony to those in the world. What was the testimony of the early Christians? It was this: they were a people who called on the name of the Lord. We are shown this in Acts 9:14, which states that Paul before his conversion was persecuting all those who *called* on the Lord's name. He was given authority from the chief priests to bind *all that call on His name*. First Corinthians 1:2 reaffirms this by showing us that the early Christians were those who in every place called upon the name of the Lord.

Many Christians today have begun to practice calling upon the Lord daily, hourly, and moment by moment in a simple, practical way. They have found to their joy that the Lord is all they need and that they can touch and fellowship

with Him at any time and in any circumstance just by calling on Him from deep within. Our calling upon the Lord should not be in an objective manner, calling on the Christ who dwells in the heavens, but calling on the Christ who is the Spirit and who dwells within our spirit (2 Tim. 4:22). By calling upon Him from deep within, we will sense the flowing and fellowship of Christ within us.

TRUE WORSHIP

“But an hour is coming, and it is now, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truthfulness, for the Father also seeks such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truthfulness” (John 4:23-24). To every Christian this true worship of fellowship is intended to be constant and life-giving. The true worship in these verses is not participating in and keeping certain rules, forms, rituals, and regulations, but rather calling upon the Lord from deep within, contacting and fellowshiping with Jesus Christ, the truth and the reality. The desire of the Father for us is that we may enjoy and participate in this true worship of touching and fellowshiping with His Son all day, every day. Whether on the job, in the classroom, driving a car, talking to a friend, or in meetings with other Christians, His desire is that we contact and fellowship with our Lord.

Again we have to praise and thank the Lord that He has not only told us that we must call upon Him, worshipping Him in spirit and in truthfulness, but He has also given us a very practical and simple way to touch Him in this true worship. The Bible gives us clear examples to show that we can touch and experience the Lord in worship by simply calling upon His name. In Matthew 8:2 we read, “And behold, a leper, coming near, worshipped Him, saying, Lord....” Then in Matthew 15:25 we read, “But she came and worshipped Him, saying, Lord....”

These verses help us to see that we can participate in true worship at any place, at any time, and in any situation. Whatever our immediate circumstance may be, we can worship Him simply by praying, “O Lord, O Lord.” Many Christians

are discovering that simply to breathe His name, "O Lord," when they are tempted or distressed or just "out of it" brings them into a real touch and fellowship with the Lord and into full deliverance from self, sin, and the world. When we cry in this way to the Lord from deep within, we have a deep inner sense of Christ and His life flowing and moving within us. In the Psalms we find that as the psalmists prayed to the Lord they cried "O Lord," over one hundred eighty times. On one occasion a psalmist said, "I cried with my whole heart; hear me, O Lord" (Psa. 119:145). On another occasion one said, "Then called I upon the name of the Lord; O Lord" (Psa. 116:4). Truly it is not a light thing to call upon the Lord, yet it is so simple and practical. In this way we can daily, moment by moment, touch and experience Christ as our inward satisfaction and joy.

The Bible gives another example of true worship in Revelation 19:4: "And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshipped God, who sits upon the throne, saying, Amen, Hallelujah!" Second Corinthians 1:20 says, "For as many promises of God as there are, in Him is the Yes; therefore also through Him is the Amen to God, for glory through us to God." And in Revelation 3:14 we find that "Amen" is another name given to Christ. When we cry *Amen* from deep within, we sense that we have touched Christ just as when we called, "O Lord, O Lord," because as His name is Lord, so also is His name Amen. Then in 1 Chronicles 16:36 we see that our calling "Amen" is a real praise to the Lord: "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel for ever and ever. And all the people said, Amen, and praised the Lord." For us to cry "Amen" from deep within is to call on the Lord and to touch Him.

Hallelujah means "praise ye the Lord," that is, "praise ye Jehovah," and over and over again the psalmist used hallelujah in his worship and praise to God. The last five Psalms begin and end with this heavenly word of worship. We also find this word offered in worship to God in Revelation 19:1, 3, 4, 6. Today it is still the same. We can worship and fellowship with our Lord in the same simple way. All day we can cry, "O Lord! Amen! Hallelujah!" from deep within.

In summary, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came to this earth, lived a human life, was crucified for our sins, was buried, rose again, and became the life-giving Spirit. When we believed into Him, He as the Spirit came into our spirit, the deepest part of our being, to be our life and everything to us. Today, He as the Spirit is like the air to us—so fresh and so available. When we cry “O Lord!” or “Amen!” or “Hallelujah!” we take Him into us as the life-giving breath, supplying us with all the riches of Himself. Today we need to breathe these four words as our prayer and praise to God. From deep within just breathe, “O Lord,” “Amen,” “Hallelujah,” and you will taste the sweetness and reality of Christ Himself. You will begin to realize more and more that His life is truly a saving life. Today many Christians have found that they can know Him, that they can be brought into the power of His resurrection, that they can experience His spontaneous salvation, and that they can walk in oneness with Him by calling moment by moment, “O Lord! Amen! Hallelujah!”

CHAPTER THREE

DEEP CALLS UNTO DEEP

Scripture Reading: Psa. 42:7; Mark 4:5-6; Isa. 39:1-6; 2 Cor. 12:1-4; Acts 5:1-5

Psalm 42:7 says, “Deep calls unto deep.” Only a call from the depths can provoke a response from the depths. Nothing shallow can ever touch the depths, nor can anything superficial touch the inward parts. Only the deep will respond to the deep. Anything that does not issue from the depths cannot touch the depths. Others can respond deep within to only what issues from deep within us. When we go to a certain place and listen to a message, the only thing that touches us is something that has issued from the depths of others. If nothing comes from the depths, the help we receive is just superficial. We have to see the importance of the depths. Anything that is not from the depths will never reach the depths of others. If we have never received help or benefit in our depths, we will never have anything issuing from our depths. If we want to render spiritual help to others, something must issue from our depths. If we do not dig deep, we can never gain others. Unless our utterance is from the depths, we will not touch the depths in others, even though we gain their emotions and thoughts and make them cry or be happy or excited for a while. Only deep calls unto deep. Superficial expressions will not touch the depths of others.

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 occur 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" (Matt. 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 which 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.) for 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 precious 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: Behold, the days are coming when everything which is in your house and which 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 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 which 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."

ABOUT TWO SERVANTS OF THE LORD

We thank the Lord that the ministry of Watchman Nee and his co-worker Witness Lee to the Body of Christ has been a blessing to the Lord's children on all of the continents on the earth for more than 80 years. Their writings have been translated into many languages. Our readers have asked us many questions about Watchman Nee and Witness Lee. In answer to their questions we present this brief sketch of the life and work of these two brothers.

Watchman Nee

Watchman Nee received Christ at the age of seventeen. His ministry is well known among seeking believers all over the world. Many have received help from his writings concerning the spiritual life and the relationship between Christ and His believers. However, not many people know about another equally crucial aspect of his ministry, which stressed the practice of the church life and the building up of the Body of Christ. Brother Nee wrote many books concerning both the Christian life and the church life. Until the end of his life Watchman Nee was a gift given by the Lord for the unveiling of the revelation in God's Word. After suffering twenty years in prison for the Lord in mainland China, he died in 1972 as a faithful witness of Jesus Christ.

Witness Lee

Witness Lee was the closest and most trusted co-worker of Watchman Nee. In 1925, at the age of nineteen, he experienced a dynamic spiritual regeneration and consecrated himself to the living God in order to serve Him. From that

time he began to study the Bible intensively. During the first seven years of his Christian life he was greatly influenced by the Plymouth Brethren. Then he met Watchman Nee, and for the next 17 years, until 1949, he was a co-worker of Brother Nee in China. During the Second World War, when China was occupied by Japan, he was imprisoned by the Japanese and suffered for his faithful service to the Lord. The ministry and work of these two servants of God brought in a great revival among the Christians in China, which resulted in the spreading of the gospel throughout the country and in the building up of hundreds of churches.

In 1949 Watchman Nee called together all his co-workers who were serving the Lord in China and commissioned Witness Lee to continue the ministry outside the mainland, on the island of Taiwan. During the following years, due to the blessing of God in Taiwan and in Southeast Asia, more than one hundred churches were established.

In the early 1960s Witness Lee was led by the Lord to move to the U.S.A., where he ministered and worked for the benefit of the Lord's children for more than 35 years. He lived in the city of Anaheim, California, from 1974 until he went to be with the Lord in June 1997. Through the years of his work in the U.S.A. he published more than 300 books.

The ministry of Witness Lee is especially helpful to seeking Christians who desire a deeper knowledge and experience of the unsearchable riches of Christ. By opening the divine revelation in the entire Scriptures, Brother Lee's ministry reveals to us how to know Christ for the building up of the church, which is His Body, the fullness of the One who fills all in all. All the believers should participate in this ministry of building up the Body of Christ so that the Body can build itself up in love. Only the accomplishing of this building can fulfill the Lord's purpose and satisfy His heart.

The main characteristic of the ministry of these two brothers is that they taught the truth according to the pure word of the Bible.

The following is a brief description of the major beliefs of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee:

1. The Holy Bible is the complete divine revelation, infallible and God-breathed, verbally inspired by the Holy Spirit.

2. God is the only one Triune God—the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit—equally co-existing and mutually co-inhering from eternity to eternity.

3. The Son of God, even God Himself, was incarnated to be a man by the name of Jesus, born of the virgin Mary, that He might be our Redeemer and Savior.

4. Jesus, a genuine Man, lived on the earth for thirty-three and a half years to make God the Father known to men.

5. Jesus, the Christ anointed by God with His Holy Spirit, died on the cross for our sins and shed His blood for the accomplishing of our redemption.

6. Jesus Christ, after being buried for three days, was raised from the dead, and forty days later He ascended into heaven, where God made Him the Lord of all.

7. After His ascension Christ poured out the Spirit of God to baptize His chosen members into one Body. Today this Spirit moves on the earth to convict sinners, to regenerate God's chosen people by imparting into them the divine life, to dwell in the believers of Christ for their growth in life, and to build up the Body of Christ for His full expression.

8. At the end of this age Christ will come back to take up His believers, to judge the world, to take possession of the earth, and to establish His eternal Kingdom.

9. The overcoming saints will reign with Christ in the millennium, and all the believers in Christ will participate in the divine blessings in the New Jerusalem in the new heaven and the new earth for eternity.

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