

THE SECRET OF SERVING THE LORD AS A SEED

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MESSAGE TWO: THE LORD'S EXAMPLE OF BEING A SEED

In the first message we considered the three principles for us to be a seed of life: We must be hidden, we must enjoy the Lord's life, and we should be ready to grow and to bear fruit." Every opportunity that comes, we take it. Now let us consider how the Lord Jesus, in His human living, was an example of being such a seed.

As the incarnated God, the Lord surely had the right to consider Himself as everything, but instead He considered Himself simply as a seed, falling into the ground to die and bear much fruit. The Lord would say to us today, "My way is different from your way. Your way is to get things done. My way is to die, so that the fruit can be brought forth. Your way is planning, organizing, working, and laboring. My way is simple. I have only one way, and only one thing to do. I just die. I am a seed to be buried, and where I am, My servant will also be. If you want to serve Me, you must be a seed. You must follow Me into the ground to die, and bring forth fruit in resurrection."

The Lord and John the Baptist

Consider the difference between the Lord and John the Baptist. John the Baptist was such a spiritual man. He declared, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" (John 1:36). Isn't that a marvelous declaration?

Eventually, however, there was a conflict between John and the Lord. John said, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30). We sometimes admire this verse, because it sounds so spiritual, but the Lord never told John the Baptist to

“decrease”; The Lord wanted John to cease completely. When John didn’t cease, he became a frustration to the Lord, and the Lord became a frustration to him.

John the Baptist was eventually put in prison, and later he was beheaded. John had served the Lord so much, but the Lord didn’t rescue him out of prison, so John sent his disciples to the Lord to ask Him, “Are You the coming One, or should we expect another?” (Matt. 11:3). How could John ask the Lord such a thing? Even in the womb he had recognized the Lord Jesus and jumped for joy. Jesus and John were cousins, and must have known each other while they were growing up. John knew who Jesus was, and how He had been conceived. Later John testified for the Lord, declaring, “Behold, the Lamb of God!” (John 1:29a). Despite all of this, after he testified for the Lord, John still asked Him from his prison, “Are You the coming One, or should we expect another?”

John the Baptist declared of the Lord, “He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:30). These seem like such spiritual words. After reading this verse, we would even be moved to pray, “Lord, you must increase, and I must decrease.” But the Lord would respond, “What are you talking about? What do you mean by ‘decrease’? You don’t need to decrease. You need to be terminated!” It is religion which tells us that we need to decrease. That is why there was eventually a conflict between the Lord and John the Baptist. John’s thought about himself was religious: “I must decrease.” The Lord’s thought about John was, “You must be terminated.” And the Lord’s thought about Himself was, “I am a seed. I must die. I must bring forth fruit in resurrection.”

The Lord and His Disciples

The disciples had the same conflict with the Lord that John the Baptist had. Consider James and John. Even their mother came to the Lord and asked Him if they could sit on His right hand and on His left. This was their human concept. “How can we be big? How can we be somebody? How can we be

manifested?” But the Lord answered graciously, “It is not up to Me, but to the Father” (Matt. 20:20-24).

During all of Jesus’ ministry there was a conflict between Him and His disciples. Peter said to the Lord, “Behold, we have left all and followed You. What then will there be for us?” All Peter had before was a fishing boat. Still, the Lord was gracious, and told him, “You will receive a hundred times as much and shall inherit eternal life” (Matt. 19:27-29). This shows that His disciples didn’t understand Him. Even John the Baptist didn’t understand Him. Their psychology was different from His. What was the reason? It was this: the Lord Jesus knew that He must fall into the ground and die; He knew that this was the only thing that counted.

Everything the Lord did when He was on the earth was precious, but without His death none of it had any value. His death was what counted. His death had the highest value. We must remember that the Lord was prepared to fall into the ground and die. All of His trust was in the resurrection life.

As a man on the earth the Lord was prepared to die. However, He also expected that through His death He would bear much fruit. This is why He could be joyful in His spirit. He knew that the Father’s will was for Him to fall into the ground and die, and then to bear much fruit. We must learn from His example in this regard.

Bearing Fruit and Begetting Children

In our serving life we must learn the difference between two things: bearing fruit in life, and producing fruit by working. What is the difference? Suppose you talk about a brother you have cared for. You say that you love him, you have helped him, and you have raised him up. Then you go on to say that he is your fruit. However, it is really up to him to say whether he is your fruit. Why? Because a father does not need to remind his son, “I am your father.” The son knows who his father is. If someone is really your fruit, then he will call you his father.

Paul called Timothy his “genuine child” (1 Tim. 1:2) and “beloved child” (2 Tim. 1:2). Timothy was Paul’s son. Paul

wasn't afraid that Timothy would write back, "What are you talking about? You're not my father!" Paul could say it very naturally, because Timothy was his genuine child in the Lord.

We must realize that bearing fruit is equal to begetting children. The Lord was this way. When the Lord expected to bear fruit, what did it mean to Him? "Behold, I and the children whom God has given to Me" (Heb. 2:13). Eventually we are all the Lord's fruit, because we are all His children. When we bear fruit, it means that we beget children. It does not mean that we manufacture something. As we labor for the Lord, we should ask ourselves, "Am I begetting, or am I manufacturing?" Manufacturing is a process. First you do one thing, then you do another thing, just as in an assembly line. When it is over, you get a product. You have produced something in your work.

When we bear fruit, we should ask ourselves whether we are begetting or manufacturing. To manufacture is cold and lifeless, and when we work in this way, the result is just a product. Once we have such a product it is of no real concern to us; we simply think, "I begot you. I served you. So now you are my fruit." Rather than taking this way, our fruit-bearing must be in the principle of begetting children.

How precious it is to die and bear much fruit! That is to beget sons, and that is to bear fruit in life. Remember what the book of Hebrews says: "Behold, I and the children whom God has given to Me" (Heb. 2:13b). We must enjoy such a verse. It is a universal declaration from the very Christ. The Lord fell into the ground to die, expecting to bear much fruit. Then in resurrection He declared, "Behold, I and the children whom God has given to Me!" Now all of us have been brought forth as His fruit. All the Christians are the Lord's children. We are the sons of God. So when we desire to serve the Lord, we must tell the Lord, "Lord, I do not want to manufacture something. I want to beget. I want to bear fruit in life." It means nothing to say, "That brother is my fruit. He is my son." The son knows who his father really is. The father may not be perfect, he may not always be right, but still he is the father. The son knows his father.

We must bear fruit by taking the Lord's way, which is to fall into the ground to die. As we fall into the ground and die, we are joyful, because we expect to bear much fruit.

Not Striving, but Fruitful

The principle of the Lord Jesus' living was the principle of the seed. This included His teaching, His working and laboring, and His operation. With Christ there was a living which is very different from our living in the church life. One verse that describes His living is Matt. 12:19, which is a quotation from Isaiah: "He will not strive nor cry out, nor will anyone hear His voice in the streets." This shows us that the Lord's living was a living without strife, and without crying out.

What does it mean to cry out? To cry out is to say, "Unfair! Unfair!" With us, our whole existence is strife and crying out over what we perceive to be fair and unfair. We strive to be on the top, and we strive to be more manifested than others. We complain when someone rebukes us. Every opportunity that comes, we strive. When we are together with other brothers we strive with one another. We strive to be somebody, and we strive to be manifested.

However, we must realize that to strive is against the principle of being buried. If you are buried, nobody knows you. Nobody appreciates you. You are dying, and yet while you are dying, you are so alive. You are buried, and yet while you are buried, you are so fruitful. When you live such a life there is no reason to strive or cry out.

When we want to serve the Lord, it is easy to have strife. For example, we often compare ourselves with other brothers: "Who speaks better? Who speaks more often?" We have strife upon strife. However, striving goes directly against the principle of being buried.

If we want to follow the Lord, the first thing is to be a seed. And if we want to be a seed, then the first thing is to be buried. Consider the living of the Lord Jesus. With Him there was no strife and no crying out. There was nothing called "fair," and there was nothing called "unfair." On one hand He taught many people, but on the other hand no one heard His voice in the streets. He helped many people, but with Him there was no "noise"; there was only His sweet presence. Everything He did was in the principle of being hidden.

The Same as the Lord

For us to follow the Lord we must be the same as He was, which means that we do not strive nor cry out so that we could be manifested. We must be able to say, “My Lord is the Lord Jesus. I know whom I have believed. I know whom I have trusted. I don’t need to strive. I don’t need to cry out. I don’t need to make any noise. With my life there is nothing fair, and there is nothing unfair. I am just a seed to be buried.”

Consider the Lord’s teaching. His teaching gave life, and it conveyed God’s economy. However, His teaching did not lead Him into any kind of self-glory. Whenever people would begin to exalt Him or try to make Him king He escaped immediately. He never departed from the principle, “I am a grain of wheat. I am a seed. I am ready to fall into the ground and die.”

In contrast, our teaching often fails to give life, or to convey God’s economy, but it does lead everyone to worship and appreciate us. Whenever we are manifested, whenever someone says that we are so good, we must be very careful. We must never allow a good report to lead us to self-glory. This is a principle.

The Danger of the Self-Life

The self-life is always waiting to be displayed. Our self-life always wants to stand out from everyone else. If we give one good testimony, if we give life in one meeting, or if we get one person saved, then what should be a marvelous blessing from the Lord becomes a trap to us.

Our good speaking can kill us. Our fruitfulness can kill us. The blessing we have received can kill us. It is very hard for us to be in Christ. If the Lord blesses us, we think we are somebody, but if the Lord doesn’t bless us, we become discouraged. We must learn from the Lord. The way for us to serve the Lord is just to be buried.

Receiving honor goes against the principle of being buried. As we are laboring we must do our best to remain hidden. Good reports may come, but we must not allow them to lead us to self-

glory. We must stay in the principle of being a seed. This is how we may serve the Lord effectively.