

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

(Lord's Day—First Morning Session)

Message Seven

## Being Watchful in Life and Faithful in Service

Scripture Reading: Matt. 25:4, 9-10, 14-15, 20-23

### I. For life, we need oil, the Spirit of God, even His filling, that we may be enabled to live the virgin life for the Lord's testimony—Matt. 25:4, 9-10:

- A. "At that time the kingdom of the heavens will be likened to ten virgins, who took their lamps and went forth to meet the bridegroom"—v. 1:
1. Virgins signify the believers viewed from the aspect of life—2 Cor. 11:2.
  2. Believers, who are the kingdom people, are like chaste virgins, bearing the Lord's testimony (the lamp) in the dark age and going out of the world to meet the Lord; for this they need not only the indwelling but also the filling of the Holy Spirit.
  3. Lamps signify the spirit of the believers (Prov. 20:27), which contains the Spirit of God as the oil (Rom. 8:16):
    - a. The believers shine forth the light of the Spirit of God from within their spirit; in order for the divine light to shine into man's inward parts, God's Spirit as the oil must soak (mingle with) man's spirit as the wick (cf. v. 16) and "burn" together with man's spirit (12:11).
    - b. Thus, the believers become the light of the world and shine as a lamp in the darkness of this age (Matt. 5:14-16; Phil. 2:15-16), bearing the testimony of the Lord for the glorification of God.
  4. The prudent virgins took oil in their vessels with their lamps—Matt. 25:4:
    - a. Man is a vessel made for God (Rom. 9:21, 23-24), and man's personality is in his soul; hence, *vessels* in Matthew 25:4 signifies the souls of the believers.
    - b. The five prudent virgins not only have oil in their lamps but also take oil in their vessels; that they have oil in their lamps signifies that they have the Spirit of God dwelling in their spirit (Rom. 8:9, 16), and that they take oil in their vessels signifies that they have the Spirit of God filling and saturating their souls (cf. 1 Pet. 2:25; Heb. 13:17).
    - c. The word *buy* in Matthew 25:9 indicates that a price must be paid; having the filling of the Holy Spirit is at a cost, such as giving up the world, dealing with self, loving the Lord above all, and counting all things loss for Christ; if we do not pay this price today, we will have to pay it after we are resurrected—cf. Rev. 3:18; 2 Cor. 5:10.
    - d. Our urgent need is to gain more of the Spirit as the consummation of the processed Triune God, to live a life of buying an extra portion of the Spirit to saturate our entire being—Matt. 25:9; cf. Dan. 5:27.

- B. Every day we need to be watchful by paying the price to buy the Spirit as the golden oil so that we may supply the churches with the Spirit for the testimony of Jesus and be rewarded by the Lord to participate in the marriage dinner of the Lamb—Matt. 25:9-10; Rev. 3:18; Zech. 4:6, 12-14; Judg. 9:9:
1. We need to love the Lord above all, having our eyes opened to see His supreme preciousness—Matt. 22:37; Phil. 3:8; 1 Pet. 2:4, 6-7; 1:19.
  2. We need to count all things as loss on account of Christ that we may gain Him, be found in Him, and know Him—Phil. 3:7-10.
  3. We need to enjoy the Lord in the Word every day early in the morning to have a new start each day—Psa. 119:147-148.
  4. We need to deal with sins thoroughly—1 John 1:7, 9.
  5. We need to abide in the fellowship with the Lord daily and hourly—v. 6; 2 Cor. 13:14.
  6. We need to redeem our time and spend our energy to be saturated and soaked with God's holy Word—2 Tim. 3:16-17; Col. 3:16.
  7. We need to be watchful, on the alert, for our prayer life, redeeming our time to pray—Eph. 6:18; Dan. 6:10; Col. 4:2.
  8. We need to redeem the time in these evil days to be filled in spirit by speaking to one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, by giving thanks to the Lord at all times for all things, and by being subject to one another in the fear of Christ—Eph. 5:14-21.
  9. We should not grieve the Holy Spirit of God by speaking corrupt, rotten (noxious, offensive, or worthless) words; instead, we should speak words of grace to give grace to those who hear—4:29-30.
  10. We should not quench the Spirit; instead, we should always rejoice, unceasingly pray, and in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for us—1 Thes. 5:16-19.
  11. We need to live, act, behave, do things, and have our being according to the mingled spirit—Rom. 8:4; 1 Cor. 6:17.
  12. We need to be filled with the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, as the supply of the Body of Christ, to live Christ for His magnification—Phil. 1:19-21a; Psa. 133; 1 Thes. 5:25.

**II. For service, for work, we need the talent, the spiritual gift, that we may be equipped as a good slave to accomplish what the Lord intends to accomplish—Matt. 25:20-23; cf. 24:45-51:**

- A. “The kingdom of the heavens is just like a man about to go abroad, who called his own slaves and delivered to them his possessions. To one he gave five talents, and to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability. And he went abroad”—25:14-15:
1. Slaves signify believers viewed from the aspect of service—1 Cor. 7:22-23; 2 Pet. 1:1; Rom. 1:1.
  2. *His possessions* signifies the church (Eph. 1:18) with all the believers, who constitute God's household (Matt. 24:45).
  3. Talents signify spiritual gifts (25:15-23; Rom. 12:6; 1 Cor. 12:4; 1 Pet. 4:10; 2 Tim. 1:6-7); the filling of the Spirit in life enables us to use the spiritual

- gift in service (work), and the spiritual gift in service matches the filling of the Spirit in life, that we may be a perfect member of Christ.
4. *The joy of your master* signifies the enjoyment of the Lord in the coming kingdom as a reward for our faithful service to Him (Matt. 25:21, 23); this refers to inward satisfaction, not to outward position; to participate in the Lord's joy is the greatest reward, better than the glory and position in the coming kingdom.
  5. In this age we must use the Lord's gift to save people and to minister His riches to them—v. 27.
- B. Our inward motive for serving the Lord is our love for Him—Exo. 21:5; Rev. 2:4-5.
  - C. Our serving the Lord should always proceed out from Him as the source of blessing, be through Him as the means and the power, and be unto Him for His glory—Rom. 11:36; cf. Num. 18:1.
  - D. We need to serve the Lord with our whole being according to the counsel of God by coordinating with the members of the Body—Rom. 12:1-2, 11; Acts 13:36; 1 Cor. 12:14-22.
  - E. We need to use the Lord's gift to build up the church by serving others with Christ and ministering Christ as grace to them—Matt. 25:27; 1 Pet. 4:10; Col. 1:7; 4:12:
    1. We need to serve as laboring priests of the gospel of God, saving sinners to offer them to God as acceptable sacrifices and eventually present them full-grown in Christ—Rom. 15:16; 12:1; Col. 1:28.
    2. We need to supply others with Christ as their spiritual food at the proper time—Matt. 24:45:
      - a. We need to speak Christ to all kinds of people daily in season and out of season—Acts 5:42; 8:4; 2 Tim. 4:2.
      - b. We need to desperately endeavor to build up a habit of speaking in any meeting—1 Cor. 14:26, 4-5, 12, 31.
    3. We need to care for people with the loving and forgiving heart of our Father God and the shepherding and seeking spirit of our Savior Christ; love is the most excellent way for us to be anything and to do anything for the building up of the Body of Christ—John 21:15-17; 1 Cor. 12:31b; 13:4-8, 13.
    4. We should not mistreat our fellow believers by criticizing, judging, or exposing them; instead, we should admonish the disorderly, console the fainthearted, the "little-souled," sustain those who are weak in spirit, soul, or body, or weak in the faith, and be long-suffering toward all—Matt. 24:49; 1 Thes. 5:14.
    5. Through our involvement in the world, we should not render the Lord's gift useless, letting it lie waste under the cloak of certain earthly excuses—Matt. 25:18-19.
  - F. Our work and labor for the Lord in the gospel are not by our natural life and natural ability but by the Lord's resurrection life and power; resurrection is the eternal principle in our service to God—Num. 17:8; 1 Cor. 15:10, 58; 16:10:
    1. The life-giving Spirit is the reality of the Triune God, the reality of resurrection, and the reality of the Body of Christ—John 16:13-15; 20:22; 1 Cor. 15:45b; Eph. 4:4.

2. All those who know resurrection have given up hope in themselves; they know that they cannot make it; everything that is of death belongs to us, and everything that is of life belongs to the Lord—Num. 17:8; 2 Cor. 1:8-9; cf. Eccl. 9:4.
  3. We must acknowledge that we are nothing, have nothing, and can do nothing; we must come to the end of ourselves to be convinced of our utter uselessness—Exo. 2:14-15; 3:14-15; Luke 22:32-33; 1 Pet. 5:5-6.
  4. The resurrected Christ as the life-giving Spirit lives in us, enabling us to do what we could never do in ourselves—1 Cor. 15:10; 2 Cor. 1:8-9, 12; 4:7-18.
- G. We should always abound in the work of the Lord, knowing that our labor for the Lord in His resurrection life with His resurrection power will never be in vain but will result in the fulfilling of God's eternal purpose—1 Cor. 15:58.

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

#### **BEING WATCHFUL TO BUY THE OIL**

Now we need to see how to be watchful, which means we need to see how to buy the oil. To be watchful is to take care of the oil. When I was a young Christian, I considered that to be watchful was to look to the heavens for His coming and even to figure out when He would come. Later, I began to realize that this understanding was altogether not practical. By reading Matthew 25:1-13 again and again, I discovered that to be watchful is to take care of the oil. A careless driver is not watchful about the gasoline in his tank. He may be driving to a certain destination and then suddenly runs out of gas because he did not watch the gas gauge. Because of his carelessness, he suffers. Today since you are driving your “Christian car,” do you care for your “gasoline”? The gasoline in your car is the Spirit, the oil. All the time you have to buy the oil.

Some young Christians indicated to me that they wanted to have some enjoyment in the world, especially since the Lord was not coming back immediately. They also said that the Lord gave us the time to be joyful, which to them meant to enjoy the worldly pleasures. Perhaps when they were over forty-five, then they would begin to love Him, because they were not so sure that He would come back within twenty years. Even if the Lord does delay His coming back, though, do we know when we will die? Probably none of those dear ones who lost their lives when the space shuttle *Challenger* exploded had any inkling that they would lose their lives that day. Does anyone know when he will die?

You may not believe that the Lord will come back in the next twenty-five years or that you will die within this time. Therefore, you may desire to live carelessly as a Christian, loving whatever you like and doing whatever is a pleasure to you. Even if your figuration is right, sooner or later you will die, and you will die in a situation in which you will have never accumulated enough oil in your vessel.

To accumulate a deposit of the extra portion of the Holy Spirit in your being is not an overnight job. In order to grow and develop properly, a human being should be exercised for at least eighteen years to take in the nourishing life supply and to study, learn, and be educated. The more one lives in a loose, unrestricted way, the more he loses the chance and the time to accumulate the proper education in every way, not only in school. To be a proper person, you need to learn things every day. As a man over eighty, I am still learning and acquiring new knowledge. I use my dictionary frequently to pick up new words. I told some of the young saints that I would hate to see that after ten years they are still the same. To

pick up things that become a constitution of your proper being is not a matter of one day or even one year. It is a matter of daily business for a lifetime.

I am still concerned that when the Lord comes back or when I die, by that time I will have had a sufficient amount of oil deposited in my vessel. If I die before His coming back, I will go to Paradise in Hades to see Abraham, David, and Paul and to be happy with these brothers, yet some day I will rise up and go to the air to stand before the Lord. Whether or not I will be raptured early remains to be seen. If we are raptured late, we will miss the wedding feast (25:10). In so many things I have the assurance, but in the matter of attending the wedding feast I do not have the assurance.

To be watchful does not mean only to watch for His coming. To be watchful is to prepare yourself every day by buying the oil. Every day we need to buy some oil. Our spiritual transformation is a daily and lifelong matter. Every day there should be some accumulation, some deposit of oil added to our being. We have not been that much in the proper exercise every day to exercise ourselves even every minute to buy the oil. A baby becomes a big boy by his daily eating. This boy is an accumulation, a constitution, of the food that he has eaten and assimilated. For us to be qualified to be raptured to enter into the Bridegroom's wedding feast requires our passing through a long period of accumulating the spiritual oil. From the time you become a Christian, you should buy the oil to be deposited in your vessel every day.

I went to a meeting of one particular group of Pentecostal Christians. During their meeting there was much so-called speaking in tongues and prayer, but after their meeting probably no one was watchful. In every way you could see their looseness. I exercised to be with them in my spirit, and our spirit always would restrict us in what we say and do. I believe that even in that meeting with them I gained more of the Spirit, because by His mercy I was watching by praying to be filled with the Spirit.

The Christian life is not a matter of legalities concerning watching television, reading the newspaper, going to sporting events, or indulging in worldly pleasures. It is not a matter of merely whether or not something is scriptural. The Christian life is a matter that concerns our buying of the oil. You may not pray, yet you will watch television. You may not pray, yet you will read the newspaper. You may not pray, yet you will play sports. There are a lot of "yets" in your daily life. You just do not pray. You may not do anything sinful, but this parable of the virgins does not indicate that the Lord will judge us according to how much sin we have committed but according to how much oil we have in our vessel. To receive the Holy Spirit into our spirit, our lamp, is free. But to have the Spirit saturating our soul is not free. If you are going to get the Holy Spirit to saturate your soul, you must pay the price in dealing with your soul.

I have had to deal with my soul in many ways to buy the oil. When it seemed like it was a good time for me to joke with a person and I joked with a few sentences, I got condemned. I am not a piece of marble but a living person. Every living person has his opinion, but many times when I tried to express my opinion, I was stopped by the buying of the oil. Many times this view has affected my daily living. Could I get more Spirit by exchanging words with my wife? Could I get more Spirit by going to a certain place? I may want to go to a certain place, but I do not have the peace within me. The point is this—every day should be a day for us to pick up the oil in every way. We need to pray from the time that we wake up every morning, "Lord, I do not like to do anything that is not under my being watchful, that is not under my buying of the oil. I like to buy the oil at any time and in any instance. Otherwise, that will be a waste of my time." This should be our prayer and even our prayerful attitude. Many nights I regretted that I did not spend all my time to be in the spirit.

### WATCHING UNTO PRAYER

In the New Testament watchfulness is wrapped up with prayer. Ephesians 6:18 tells us that we should be those watching unto prayer. We need to be watchful, on the alert for our prayer life. *Watching unto this* in verse 18 refers to *prayer and petition*. There is no other way to get the oil except by praying. If you do not pray, it means that you do not pay the price to buy the oil. Through prayer we receive more Spirit. Every time we pray, we have the deep sensation that some amount of the Spirit has been gained by us in our prayer. To spend our time for prayer rather than for so many other things means to pay the price to get the oil.

### BUYING THE OIL FOR OURSELVES

All ten virgins were raised up from the dead, but their rapture after their resurrection was according to how much oil they had in their vessels. Our initial receiving of the Spirit at regeneration is not a ticket for us to enter into the wedding feast. The sufficient oil, the adequate oil, will become our entry, our ticket, to the wedding feast. The foolish virgins discovered that they did not have the adequate supply of oil, so they wanted to borrow from the prudent ones (Matt. 25:8). Then the prudent virgins indicated that what they had was sufficient only for themselves (v. 9). Here is a principle—we can never borrow others' spirituality. One's spirituality can qualify only himself. You cannot borrow another's eating, and another person cannot eat for you. It is impossible. You cannot even borrow another person's study. You cannot ask someone to go to school for you and borrow whatever he learns. The prudent virgins told the foolish ones they had to buy the oil for themselves. When they are going to buy, the ready ones who have the sufficient oil are raptured. No doubt, that is before the tribulation.

The foolish ones were charged to go to those who sell the oil. According to Zechariah 4:11-14 and Revelation 11:3-4, the two witnesses during the great tribulation, the two olive trees and the two sons of oil, will be the oil sellers. That means they will give people more Spirit. The foolish virgins have to go to these oil sellers in the great tribulation to buy the oil. At that time the entire world will be a place of tribulation. As long as you are there, you are suffering; you are passing through the tribulation. If the foolish ones do not go to these oil sellers in the tribulation, they could never get the oil. This shows us that the foolish virgins will have to pay some price in suffering to get the oil, a price that they had never paid in their entire Christian lives. Even after the resurrection, they will still have to go through the suffering to pay the price for the oil. Finally, the foolish ones came (Matt. 25:11), but their coming, their rapture, was too late. The point again is this—since the time we were saved, every day should be redeemed by us to buy the oil. We all need to rise up from today to buy the oil.

### NOT GRIEVING THE HOLY SPIRIT OF GOD

Ephesians 4:30 tells us not to grieve the Holy Spirit of God. Do not make Him unhappy. The Holy Spirit who is now sealing us unto the redemption of our body is in us. We must make Him happy. Because He has really joined us with Him as one (1 Cor. 6:17), when we are unhappy, this indicates that He is unhappy. If you do not come to the meeting, or if you come and do not function, this makes the Spirit unhappy. At the end of the day you may not feel so good, but when you come to the meeting and function in it, you feel so happy. This means that the Holy Spirit is happy within you. If you do not feel happy, this is an indication that you have grieved Him. Why have you grieved Him? Because you did not buy Him. You did not pay the price for Him. He is the oil.

## **NOT QUENCHING THE SPIRIT**

First Thessalonians 5:19 says, “Do not quench the Spirit.” Sometimes we even go further not only to grieve Him but also to quench Him. Sometimes we may tell the Lord to tolerate us for a certain time and not to inspire us. We may know that the Spirit is moving within us, but we may not like it. To quench the Spirit is to reject the buying of the oil. In many things we do not buy the Spirit, so we miss the chance to accumulate more and more of the Spirit in our being.

## **WALKING ACCORDING TO THE SPIRIT**

Nearly the last charge in the entire New Testament is to walk according to the spirit (Rom. 8:4), which is our human spirit mingled with God’s Holy Spirit (cf. v. 16), our mingled spirit. *To walk* means “to live, to act, to behave, to do things, to have our being.” We have to have our being according to the spirit, and this is to buy the Spirit. Our thinking and our speaking, the expression of our attitude, should be according to the spirit. If you are having your being according to the spirit, this is to buy the Spirit. But to walk, to have your being according to the spirit, needs us to pay a great price. You may need to stop your excessive talking on the telephone and stop your further reading of the newspaper from the first page to the next.

## **BUYING THE OIL TO ANNUL OUR BARRENNESS**

The real revival is to be raised up. We do not need to resurrect in the future to discover that we need to go and buy the oil. We need to be raised up today, every day paying the price to buy the Spirit. This is real revival, and I do believe that by being such persons, we will be fruitful. Many of us have to admit that we are barren. I hate to see the barrenness. We can give many excuses for this, such as our having been defamed and criticized. But how much have we been doing in these past few years in the matter of contacting others and speaking the Lord Jesus?

The many missionaries over the past two centuries would never have gone out if they had made excuses. The dear missionaries who went to China could have said, “The Chinese are closed and are too conservative. Even if they would open up their doors, they would not listen to anyone from the West. If I go, I will waste my time.” There are always excuses against the ministry going out. But thank the Lord, these missionaries went, and they went in all kinds of hardships. According to my observation, the Presbyterian missionaries who went to China one hundred years ago were some of the best. Even though they did not know as much truth as we do, have as much light as we have, or have as much growth in life as we have, they had a heart for Jesus, to preach Him to the poor ones. They made a big success, and even I am here ministering today due to their labor. They did everything to open the door for the preaching of the Lord Jesus. When we grew up, we were under their mission work, and I studied at schools established by the missions. They brought the Bible to China, translated it into Chinese, and passed it on to us. Furthermore, they preached the Lord Jesus. At least they could say in Chinese, “Jesus loves you.” Sometimes children would mock them or throw stones at them. Some were really caught by them even though they could only say “Jesus loves you.”

Saints, we have no excuse. We do not need to go that far to China. We are in our Jerusalem, which is our neighborhood. We have to go. At least we can go once a week or once every two weeks to a certain neighbor. You could go to visit the same neighbor twenty-six times within one year. I do not believe that nothing will happen if we visit our neighbors in this way. Something will happen. If we all get one this year, all the churches will double.

The increase of some of the churches in the past few years is too low. Is this not a shame? This is due to our not buying the oil daily. If we would buy the oil daily, this will issue in something that cancels or annuls our barrenness. We will surely be fruitful. Just to encourage the brothers to go out to distribute the books is a temporary thing.

**LIVING A LIFE OF BUYING  
AN EXTRA PORTION OF THE OIL**

My burden is to fellowship with you that you may rise up to live a life of always buying an extra portion of the oil by not wasting your time in doing anything. If you do something, and you feel that it is a waste of time, you had better stop doing it. Use that time to contact the Lord, to pray. This is to watch unto prayer. To be watchful is not to let your time go, not to waste your time, but to take every time as a chance to buy the oil. To buy the oil is the best way to redeem our time, for the days are short. We all must rise up.

I believe that I have given you enough deeper truths already. I feel burdened to fellowship with you in this way. All of us need to live such a life of buying the oil daily, even hourly. We need to buy the oil in the way we dress, shop, talk, and live. In everything we must be serious and consider the solemn parable given by the Lord Jesus in Matthew 25:1-13. Whether or not we will be raptured early to enter into the wedding feast depends upon our daily buying of the Spirit from this moment. This is a lifelong matter, not an overnight matter. To get the proper and adequate education is not an overnight matter. A person needs to begin his study from kindergarten and pass through many grades until he finishes college. Take this fellowship as something serious and solemn. This is not just advice but my serious fellowship with all of you in love. I do hope that we all would rise up to live such a life. I do not like merely to stir up or move people, because that does not work. The one thing that the Lord needs and that we need is to rise up to pay the price to buy the oil all the time in all the matters in our daily life. (*The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1985*, vol. 5, "The Way to Practice the Lord's Present Move," pp. 526-533)