

# The Hidden Life

by J.R. Miller

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*The sermon explores the concept of the hidden life of a Christian, which is nourished by the Holy Spirit and is a source of strength and peace.*

**Scripture:** 1 Samuel 16:7, John 15:5, Galatians 5:22, Colossians 3:3

**Topics:** "Spiritual Growth", "Hidden Life in Christ"

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## Description

J.R. Miller emphasizes the concept of the hidden life in Christ, illustrating how the true essence of life--spiritual, emotional, and mental--remains unseen by the world. He explains that while outward appearances may deceive, the heart's true condition and the spiritual life are known only to God. Miller uses metaphors such as a vine bearing fruit outside a garden wall and the hidden beauty of a bird's nest to convey that Christians draw their strength and life from Christ, who is in God. He reassures believers that their hidden life will one day be revealed in its full glory, reflecting the beauty of Christ. Ultimately, he encourages the faithful to find peace in the knowledge that their true life is secure in God, awaiting full revelation in eternity.

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## Transcript

"Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart!" 1 Samuel 16:7. In a sense, all life is hidden. The blood courses through the veins as the heart keeps throbbing, throbbing, day and night. You can lay your finger on your wrist and feel the pulsings. The lungs also continue breathing, inhaling, exhaling, without pause, from infancy's first gasp until at last watching friends say, "He is gone!" Pulsings, breathings--yes; but have you found the life? What is it that keeps the heart throbbing and the lungs respiring? "Life," you say. Yes--but what is life?

Take the mind. It is very active. One man thinks, and writes beautiful poems or charming stories. Another thinks and puts marvelous visions on canvas, or throws great bridges over rivers, or erects a noble cathedral. But who ever saw the process of thought? Mental life is hidden.

Take heart life--the life you lived yesterday, with its hopes and fears, its joys and sorrows, its pleasures and pains, its cares and its affections, its thousand varying experiences. Does the world know what is going on in your heart today--or any day? People see the smile or the shadow which flits across your face--but they do not see the emotion which produced it. Even to your closest bosom friend your life is unrevealed, cannot be revealed. Says Keble--

"Not even the tenderest heart next to our own

Knows half the reasons why we smile or sigh."

Take spiritual life. We see the effects of the Holy Spirit's work--new dispositions, new conduct, new character; but the divine spark of spiritual life--we cannot see as it comes down from above. It is secret, hidden. One day you are sad, disheartened; and, taking up your Bible, you find a sweet word of promise, a revealing of God's love--and into your heart there comes a strange peace. One day you are in sorrow. A friend sits down beside you, and speaks a few words of strong comfort. You are calmed and quieted. Yet no one sees any of these processes. They are hidden, secret.

There is an inspired word which says, "Your life is hidden with Christ in God." The thought is wonderfully bold and strong. Christ is the source of the Christian life. Christ is in the heaven with God, in God, wrapped up in the very glory of divinity. Hence the Christian's life is with Christ in God. Its source is thus in the very heart of God.

Outside an old garden wall hung a great branch covered with purple clusters of grapes. No root was visible anywhere; and those who saw it wondered how the vine grew, how its life was nourished, where its roots clung. It was then discovered that the great vine from which this branch sprung, grew inside the garden. There it had an immense root, with a stem like the trunk of a tree. This one branch had pushed out over the wall and hung there, bearing in the mellow autumn its clusters of luscious fruit.

Likewise--every Christian life in this world is a branch of a great vine which grows in heaven--a branch growing outside the wall. "Your life is hidden with Christ in God. We have heaven's life in us in this world. The fruits which grow upon our life are heavenly fruits. Jesus spoke of giving his own peace to his disciples. He prayed that they might have his joy fulfilled in themselves. We read too that love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, meekness--are fruits of the Holy Spirit. Thus in our human experience in this world--we are drawing our life and its support from the hidden source of life which is in the heart of God. This assures us of its security. It is beyond the reach of earthly harm.

Herein, too, lies the secret of the quiet peace which we find so often in Christian sufferers. In all their pain they are sustained by some hidden strength which the world cannot understand. They are drawing their life from a source which no earthly experience can reach or affect.

"Oh! There are some who, while on earth they dwell,

And seem to differ little from the throng,

Already to the heavenly choir belong,

And even hear the same sweet anthem swell.

They joy, at times, with joy unspeakable,

Pouring to him they love their heartfelt song;

While to behold him face to face they long,

As the parched traveler for the cooling well.

Ask you how such from other may be known?

Mark those whose look is calm, their brow serene,

Gentle their words, love breathing in each tone,

Scattering rich blessings all around unseen.

They draw each hour--from living founts above--

The streams they pour around of peace and joy and love."

One writes of watching an old tree in the autumn, as the leaves were touched by the frosts and fell off when the rough wind blew. As the tree at last became bare, he saw a bird's nest on one of the branches. Through the summer days the nest had been hidden beneath the thick foliage--but the blasts of winter which swept away the leaves uncovered this home and shelter of the birds. So, oftentimes, is it in the history of God's children. In their prosperity we see not their refuge, which is hidden and secret--hidden beneath the leaves of worldly prosperity. But when adversity comes, taking away earthly beauty, stripping off the bright foliage--their true and eternal refuge in God is disclosed. The storms of earth only drive them back into God's bosom.

We say a certain person's beauty has been wasted by sickness. One came to me whom I had not seen before for five years. A dark tragedy had just darkened her home, and I went to try to give a little comfort. Until that day, her face had been beautiful with all the freshness of youth. But these five years since, had been like twenty years in her life. The beauty was now faded; how could it have been otherwise, with the broken heart she brought out of those terrible days? Yet a few minutes conversation showed me that in all the wasting of physical beauty--that her spiritual loveliness had not been marred. She had kept near the heart of Christ in all the bitter anguish--and the joy and peace of her inner life had not failed. Beauty of the face is only external, and is transient. Any accident may mar it. But beauty of the soul is spiritual and imperishable. It abides even in the destruction of the body.

There is mystery in this hidden life--which is in every Christian. It has a strange power of recognition. When two Christians meet, though utter strangers heretofore, there is something which reveals them to each other. The same life pulses in their hearts. They have the same hopes, the same joys, the same Christ, the same purpose in living, the same heaven. The world has nothing in common with Christians--but all who love Christ are members of one family.

The Christian's life is hidden also--in the sense that its true and full glory is concealed in this world, and will not appear until it enters the heavenly life. Only the bud is seen as yet; by and by the flower will burst into rich bloom. The best of every Christian's life remains unrevealed on the earth. We fail to realize even our own best intentions. You did not live yesterday as you meant to live when you went out in the morning. No artist ever puts on his canvas--all the beauty of his mental vision. No singer ever gets into the song he sings--all the music of his soul. No saintly Christian ever translates into disposition and conduct--all the spiritual loveliness which glows in his ideal. Our hands are too clumsy and unskillful to express the best things of our mind and heart in word or act or character. We see the good--but cannot do it, in more than a mere fragmentary way. Yet the visions of beauty which we have in mere flashes and glimmerings, are hints of divine revealings which are yet to be made, and of the wondrous possibilities which lie in the hidden depths of our nature, some day to be brought out.

The sea covers great fields of concealed splendors. Now and then a storm stirs its depths, and washes up a few brilliant shells or pebbles, which shine like fragments broken from heaven's walls. Yet these few stones or shells are only specimens of millions more--even more brilliant--which are buried in the ocean depths. Likewise--there come out here and there, in a Christian's life, in times of special exaltation, glimpses of something rarely beautiful--an act, a word, a self denial, a disposition, the revealing of some noble quality or some marvelous power or measure of love; and we say as we see it, "That is like Christ! That is a gleam of heavenly life! That is a fragment of divinity!" But that flashing gleam of character, that glimmering of Christ-likeness, that act which seems too pure for earth--is only a hint of the infinite possibilities of each human soul. Hidden in the depths of the nature, under all its faults and imperfections, is a life which far surpasses the highest things which are reached in this world. The love, joy, peace, unselfishness, purity, holiness, attained in the saintliest experience of earthly Christian life--are but divine intimations of what we shall be when the limiting conditions of earth shall have been left behind.

There will be a time, when all this hidden life shall be revealed. The bud shall burst into the rich flower. The gem shall break through its rough imprisoning crust, and shine in lustrous splendor. The dull character which here shows only gleams and flashes of spiritual beauty--amid manifold defects, flaws, and infirmities--shall yet show in its every feature--the beauty of Christ. The holy thoughts, desires, longings, and the hunger after righteousness, which here are hindered, restrained, limited, and which fail to take full form in life and character--shall yet be wrought out in deeds as beautiful and holy as themselves. We shall see Christ, and we shall be like him--when we shall see him as he is.

Some day we shall slip away from things that are familiar to our eyes and hearts here, and shall enter into what we call the other life. Really, however, it is not another life--but only a fuller, deeper unveiling of the life which we have been living in Christ, since he first saved us. The mystery of the Christian's life of faith, is that it is "hidden with Christ in God." Here we touch but the outer edge of it; in what we call dying--we shall press farther into its blessedness. Here our little barks move only along the shore; by and by we shall sail out into the infinite expanse. There will be nothing to dread in the experience. We call it death, and we shudder at its mention; but really it is life--fullness of life. To those who watch us in departing, we shall disappear; but to us the path will be only one of increasing brightness, as we go on until we enter into the presence of Christ.

So will it be when we leave this world. It will not grow dark to our eyes, as we imagine it will do, when we enter the valley of shadows. We shall pass into fuller light, until we, too, are hidden with Christ in God, in the glory of eternal life!

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Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/jr-miller/the-hidden-life/>

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