

TAKING THE WAY OF ENJOYING CHRIST AS THE TREE OF LIFE , Week 2

The Two Trees and the Two Principles of Living

Scripture Reading: Gen. 2:9; Heb. 4:12; 1 Cor. 2:14-15; Rom. 8:4, 6; Eph. 4:18-19; 2 Cor. 11:3

Genesis 2:9	And out of the ground Jehovah God caused to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, as well as the tree of life in the middle of the garden and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.
Hebrews 4:12	For the word of God is living and operative and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit and of joints and marrow, and able to discern the thoughts and intentions of the heart.
1 Corinthians 2:14	But a foolish man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him and he is not able to know them because they are discerned spiritually.
1 Corinthians 2:15	But the spiritual man discerns all things, but he himself is discerned by no one.
Romans 8:4	That the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the spirit.
Romans 8:6	For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the spirit is life and peace.
Ephesians 4:18	Being darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance which is in them, because of the hardness of their heart;
Ephesians 4:19	Who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lasciviousness to work all uncleanness in greediness.
2 Corinthians 11:3	But I fear lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your thoughts would be corrupted from the simplicity and the purity toward Christ.

Day 1

Genesis 2:9	And out of the ground Jehovah God caused to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, as well as the tree of life in the middle of the garden and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.
Genesis 2:17	But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, of it you shall not eat; for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.

I. The two trees in Genesis 2:9—the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil—represent two principles of living:

- A. The two trees show that a Christian can live according to two different principles—the **principle of right and wrong** or the **principle of life**—1 Cor. 8:1.
- B. Being a **Christian** is not a matter of the principle of right and wrong, the principle of good and evil, but is a **matter of life**—1 John 5:11-13, 20.
- C. When we received the Lord Jesus and **gained a new life**, we obtained another principle of living—the principle of life; if we do not know this principle, we will set the principle of life aside and follow the principle of right and wrong.

Day 2

Genesis 2:9	And out of the ground Jehovah God caused to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, as well as the tree of life in the middle of the garden and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.
Genesis 2:17	But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, of it you shall not eat; for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.

- D. Being a Christian is not a matter of asking whether something is right or wrong; it is a **matter of checking with the life inside of us** whenever we do something— Rom. 8:6; Eph. 4:18-19.

II. Our Christian life is based on an inner life, not an outward standard of right and wrong; our principle of living is inward instead of outward:

- A. If we live by the **principle of right and wrong**, we are the **same as the worldly people**—v. 17.
- B. Right and wrong are not decided by an outward standard but by the **inner life**.
- C. We should not only **avoid** all that is evil but also all that is merely good:
 - 1. Christians can **do only that which comes from life**; there are evil things, good things, and the things of life— John 1:4; 10:10; 1 John 2:25; 5:13.
 - 2. In Genesis 2:9 “good and evil” are put together as one way, whereas “life” is another way.
 - 3. There is a standard that is higher than the standard of good; it is the **standard of life**—John 11:25; 1 John 5:11-12.

Day 3

Romans 8:6	For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the spirit is life and peace.
Romans 8:11	And if the Spirit of the One who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you.

- 4. The standard of Christian living deals not only with evil things but also with **good and right things**.
- 5. Many things are right according to human standards, but the divine standard pronounces them wrong because they **lack the divine life**.
- D. Christian living is **based on the inner life**—Rom. 8:2, 6, 10-11:
 - 1. No Christian should determine **anything apart from life**—1 John 5:13.
 - 2. Whatever **increases the inner life is right**, and whatever **decreases the inner life is wrong**.
 - 3. **Our pathway is God’s life**, not right and wrong; the difference between these two principles is immense, and the contrast here is great.
 - 4. The one question we must ask is **whether the divine life within us rises or falls**; this is what must determine the path we take.
 - 5. **God requires us to satisfy the divine life**; we must do things in a way that satisfies the life God has given us—John 1:4; 3:15.
 - 6. As Christians, we should not only repent before God for the sins we have committed; often, we need to **repent before God for the good things we have done**.
 - 7. The principle of our living is not one that differentiates between good and evil; **we must come before God to determine what is of life and what is of death**— Rom. 8:6; 1 John 3:14.

We must learn the lesson before God that we should never act merely according to the standard of right and wrong. The standard of right and wrong is not bad; it is a good standard, but it is **not good enough for a Christian**. The Christian's standard surpasses right and wrong. The things which are wrong are wrong, but the things which are right are not always right. *If we act according to God's life, He will show us that His demands are higher than those of human law.* This being the case, it becomes very easy to live the Christian life. In every matter when we seek God's speaking within us, *spontaneously there will be the shining of inward light.* Please remember that our regeneration is a fact. It is also a fact that God is living in us through the Lord Jesus. *The Lord is constantly expressing Himself within us.* We hope that each of us would be able to say to God, "Grace me so that I live by the tree of life, not by the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. I want to constantly pay attention to life. I want to ask, 'What is the sense of life?'" If we live by this principle, we will see a great change in our Christian life.

Many problems arise because we only have a standard of right and wrong. Many mistakes are made because we do not have the standard of life. If we have the standard of life, many problems will be resolved. (*The Present Testimony, chapter 37*)

Day 4

Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God is living and operative and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit and of joints and marrow, and able to discern the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

Romans 8:16 The Spirit Himself witnesses with our spirit that we are children of God.

III. If we would live according to the principle of life, we need to **discern the spirit from the soul and know the spirit**—Heb. 4:12; 1 Cor. 2:14-15:

- A. The Lord who is the Spirit is **living, dwelling, working, moving**, and **acting in our spirit**, and we are **one spirit with Him**—2 Cor. 3:17; Rom. 8:16; 1 Cor. 6:17:
 1. If we desire to know the Lord in a practical way and experience Him in our daily life, **we must learn to discern our spirit**—2:14-15.
 2. If we do not know our human spirit, we cannot understand God's moving within us and cannot follow the Lord, because the Lord is the Spirit living within our spirit—1 John 2:27; 2 Tim. 4:22.
- B. We need to know the difference between our spirit and our other inward parts—Psa. 51:6; Ezek. 36:26; 1 Pet. 3:4.
- C. To do anything in our soul, whether it is right or wrong, is to live in the old man; thus, we need to **deny our soul-life, our self**—Matt. 16:24-26.
- D. When we follow our spirit, we follow the Lord Himself, because the **Lord is in our spirit**—2 Tim. 4:22; 1 Cor. 6:17.

Day 5

Romans 8:6 For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the spirit is life and peace.

Ephesians 4:18-19 Being darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance which is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; Who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lasciviousness to work all uncleanness in greediness.

IV. In order to live according to the principle of life, we need to follow the inner sense of life—Rom. 8:6; Eph. 4:18-19; Isa. 40:31:

- A. The sense of life is **subjective, personal, and practical**:
 1. The sense of life on the negative side is the **feeling of death**—Rom. 8:6a.
 2. The sense of life on the positive side is the **feeling of life and peace**, with a **consciousness of strength, satisfaction, rest, brightness, and comfort**—v. 6b.
- B. The source of the **sense of life** is the **divine life** (Eph. 4:18-19), the **law of life** (Rom. 8:2), the **Holy Spirit** (v. 11; 1 John 2:27), **Christ abiding in us** (John 15:4-5), and **God operating in us** (Phil. 2:13).
- C. The function of the sense of life is to make us know whether we are living in the **natural life** or in the **divine life** and whether we are living in the **flesh** or in the **Spirit**—1 Cor. 2:14-15; Rom. 8:8-9; Gal. 5:16-17.
- D. A believer's growth in life depends on how he deals with the inner sense of life—Eph. 4:15; Col. 2:19; 1 Cor. 3:6-7.
- E. We need to **pray ourselves into the sense of life** and live under its controlling, guiding, and directing element day by day—Rom. 8:6; Eph. 4:18-19; 1 John 2:27.
- F. The more we walk according to the spirit and follow the sense of life, the **more we will live according to the principle of life**—Rom. 8:4, 6.

Day 6

2 Corinthians 11:2-3

For I am jealous over you with a jealousy of God; for I betrothed you to one husband to present you as a pure virgin to Christ. But I fear lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your thoughts would be corrupted from the simplicity and the purity toward Christ.

V. If we live according to the principle of life, we will discern matters not according to right and wrong but according to life and death—2 Cor. 11:3:

- A. The Gospel of John emphasizes the fact that the tree of life is versus the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and that **we should care** not for good or evil but **for life**—4:10-14, 20-21, 23-24; 8:3-9; 9:1-3; 11:20-27.
- B. The best way to discern a matter—the secret of discernment—is to **discern according to life or death**; we must learn to discern, to differentiate, matters by life and death, rejecting any speaking that deprives us of the enjoyment of Christ as our life supply but **receiving the genuine ministry of the Lord**, which always strengthens us in the enjoyment of Christ as our life supply—Rom. 8:6; 2 Cor. 11:3.

The secret of discernment is to **discern according to life or death**. Any kind of teaching that causes your enjoyment of the Lord to **cease is something of death**, no matter how good that teaching seems to be. As long as someone's teaching or preaching deprives us of the enjoyment of the Lord as our life supply, that teaching is of the **serpent**. However, the **genuine ministry of the Lord always strengthens us in the enjoyment of Him as our life supply**.

We should not expect the number of Judaizers to be reduced. On the contrary, their number will probably increase. Whenever you hear them speak or read their books, keep in mind this principle of discerning according to life and death. Anything that cuts you off from the enjoyment of the Lord is of the serpent. But **anything that causes your enjoyment of the Lord to increase is of the Spirit and of the New Testament ministry**. (*Life-study of Second Corinthians, chapter 53*)