

## Message Two

### **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

#### **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.
- 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.
  - 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.

**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.

**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.

**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.