

Message Two

The Two Trees and the Two Principles of Living

TW Hymns: 509, 1143

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

- Gen 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.
- Heb 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 Cor 2:14 But a soulish 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 Cor 2:15 But the spiritual man discerns all things, but he himself is discerned by no one.
- Rom 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.
- Rom 8:6 For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the spirit is life and peace.
- Eph 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;
- Eph 4:19 Who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lasciviousness to work all uncleanness in greediness.
- 2 Cor 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.

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:

- Gen 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.
- 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.
1 Cor 8:1 Now concerning things sacrificed to idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up.
- 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.
1 John 5:11 And this is the testimony, that God gave to us eternal life and this life is in His Son.
1 John 5:12 He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.
1 John 5:13 I have written these things to you that you may know that you have eternal life, to you who believe into the name of the Son of God.
1 John 5:20 And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding that we might know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.
- 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.
Rom 8:6 For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the spirit is life and peace.
Eph 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;
Eph 4:19 Who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lasciviousness to work all uncleanness in greediness.

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.
 Eph 4:17 This therefore I say and testify in the Lord, that you no longer walk as the Gentiles also walk in the vanity of their mind,
- 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.
 John 1:4 In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.
 John 10:10 The thief does not come except to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life and may have it abundantly.
 1 John 2:25 And this is the promise which He Himself promised us, the eternal life.
 1 John 5:13 I have written these things to you that you may know that you have eternal life, to you who believe into the name of the Son of God.
 2. In Genesis 2:9 “good and evil” are put together as one way, whereas “life” is another way.
 Gen 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.
 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.
 John 11:25 Jesus said to her, I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes into Me, even if he should die, shall live;
 1 John 5:11 And this is the testimony, that God gave to us eternal life and this life is in His Son.
 1 John 5:12 He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.
 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:
- Rom 8:2 For the law of the Spirit of life has freed me in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and of death.
- Rom 8:6 For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the spirit is life and peace.
- Rom 8:10 But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the spirit is life because of righteousness.
- Rom 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.
1. No Christian should determine anything apart from life—1 John 5:13.
 1 John 5:13 I have written these things to you that you may know that you have eternal life, to you who believe into the name of the Son of God.
 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.
 John 1:4 In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.
 John 3:15 That everyone who believes into Him may have eternal life.
 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.
- Rom 8:6 For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the spirit is life and peace.
- 1 John 3:14 We know that we have passed out of death into life because we love the brothers. He who does not love abides in death.

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:

- Heb 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 Cor 2:14 But a soulish 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 Cor 2:15 But the spiritual man discerns all things, but he himself is discerned by no one.
- 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:
- 2 Cor 3:17 And the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.
- Rom 8:16 The Spirit Himself witnesses with our spirit that we are children of God.
- 1 Cor 6:17 But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit.
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.

1 Cor 2:14 But a soulish 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 Cor 2:15 But the spiritual man discerns all things, but he himself is discerned by no one.
 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.

1 John 2:27 And as for you, the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone teach you; but as His anointing teaches you concerning all things and is true and is not a lie, and even as it has taught you, abide in Him.

2 Tim 4:22 The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you.
- 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.
- Psa 51:6 Behold, You delight in truth in the inward parts; / And in the hidden part You would make known wisdom to me.
- Ezek 36:26 I will also give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will take away the heart of stone out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh.
- 1 Pet 3:4 But the hidden man of the heart in the incorruptible adornment of a meek and quiet spirit, which is very costly in the sight of God.
- 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.
- Matt 16:24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, If anyone wants to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me.
- Matt 16:25 For whoever wants to save his soul-life shall lose it; but whoever loses his soul-life for My sake shall find it.
- Matt 16:26 For what shall a man be profited if he gains the whole world, but forfeits his soul-life? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul-life?
- 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.
- 2 Tim 4:22 The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you.
- 1 Cor 6:17 But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit.

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:

- Rom 8:6 For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the spirit is life and peace.
- Eph 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;
- Eph 4:19 Who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lasciviousness to work all uncleanness in greediness.
- Isa 40:31 Yet those who wait on Jehovah will renew their strength; / They will mount up with wings like eagles; / They will run and will not faint; / They will walk and will not become weary.
- 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.
Rom 8:6a For the mind set on the flesh is death, ...
 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.
Rom 8:6b ... but the mind set on the spirit is life and peace.
- 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).
- Eph 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;
- Eph 4:19 Who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lasciviousness to work all uncleanness in greediness.
- Rom 8:2 For the law of the Spirit of life has freed me in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and of death.
- Rom 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.
- 1 John 2:27 And as for you, the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone teach you; but as His anointing teaches you concerning all things and is true and is not a lie, and even as it has taught you, abide in Him.
- John 15:4 Abide in Me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me.
- John 15:5 I am the vine; you are the branches. He who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing.
- Phil 2:13 For it is God who operates in you both the willing and the working for His good pleasure.
- 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.
- 1 Cor 2:14 But a soulish 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 Cor 2:15 But the spiritual man discerns all things, but he himself is discerned by no one.
- Rom 8:8 And those who are in the flesh cannot please God.
- Rom 8:9 But you are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Yet if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not of Him.
- Gal 5:16 But I say, Walk by the Spirit and you shall by no means fulfill the lust of the flesh.
- Gal 5:17 For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these oppose each other that you would not do the things that you desire.
- 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.
- Eph 4:15 But holding to truth in love, we may grow up into Him in all things, who is the Head, Christ,
- Col 2:19 And not holding the Head, out from whom all the Body, being richly supplied and knit together by means of the joints and sinews, grows with the growth of God.

1 Cor 3:6 I planted, Apollos watered, but God caused the growth.
1 Cor 3:7 So then neither is he who plants anything nor he who waters, but God who causes the growth.

- 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.

Rom 8:6 For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the spirit is life and peace.
Eph 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;
Eph 4:19 Who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lasciviousness to work all uncleanness in greediness.
1 John 2:27 And as for you, the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone teach you; but as His anointing teaches you concerning all things and is true and is not a lie, and even as it has taught you, abide in Him.

- 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.

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

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:

2 Cor 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.

- 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.

John 4:10 Jesus answered and said to her, If you knew the gift of God and who it is who says to you, Give Me a drink, you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water.

John 4:11 The woman said to Him, Sir, You have no bucket, and the well is deep; where then do You get this living water?

John 4:12 Are You greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank of it himself, as well as his sons and his cattle?

John 4:13 Jesus answered and said to her, Everyone who drinks of this water shall thirst again,
John 4:14 But whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall by no means thirst forever; but the water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water springing up into eternal life.

John 4:20 Our fathers worshipped in this mountain, yet you say that in Jerusalem is the place where men must worship.

John 4:21 Jesus said to her, Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father.

John 4:23 But an hour is coming, and it is now, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truthfulness, for the Father also seeks such to worship Him.

John 4:24 God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truthfulness.

John 8:3 And the scribes and Pharisees brought a woman caught in adultery, and having set her in the midst,

John 8:4 They said to Him, Teacher, this woman has been caught committing adultery, in the very act.

John 8:5 Now in the law, Moses commanded us to stone such women. What then do You say?

John 8:6 But they said this to tempt Him, so that they might have reason to accuse Him. But Jesus stooped down and wrote with His finger on the ground.

John 8:7 But when they persisted in questioning Him, He stood up and said to them, He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.

John 8:8 And again He stooped down and wrote on the ground.

John 8:9 And when they heard that, they went out one by one, beginning with the older ones. And Jesus was left alone, and the woman stood where she was, in the midst.

John 9:1 And as He passed by, He saw a man blind from birth.
 John 9:2 And His disciples asked Him, saying, Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he would be born blind?
 John 9:3 Jesus answered, Neither has this man sinned nor his parents, but he was born so, that the works of God might be manifested in him.
 John 11:20 Martha therefore, when she heard that Jesus was coming, went to meet Him; but Mary sat in the house.
 John 11:21 Then Martha said to Jesus, Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.
 John 11:22 But even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You.
 John 11:23 Jesus said to her, Your brother will rise again.
 John 11:24 Martha said to Him, I know that he will rise again in the resurrection in the last day.
 John 11:25 Jesus said to her, I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes into Me, even if he should die, shall live;
 John 11:26 And everyone who lives and believes into Me shall by no means die forever. Do you believe this?
 John 11:27 She said to Him, Yes, Lord; I have believed that You are the Christ, the Son of God, He who comes into the world.

- 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.

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