

TAKING THE WAY OF ENJOYING CHRIST AS THE TREE OF LIFE , Week 6

**Becoming a Reproduction of Christ
as the Tree of Life for the Ministry of Life**

Scripture Reading: John 1:4; 12:24; 15:1, 4-5; 1 John 5:16; 2 Cor. 4:12

John 1:4	In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.
John 12:24	Truly, truly, I say to you, Unless the grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it abides alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.
John 15:1	I am the true vine, and My Father is the husbandman.
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.
1 John 5:16	If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin not unto death, he shall ask and he will give life to him, to those sinning not unto death. There is a sin unto death; I do not say that he should make request concerning that.
2 Corinthians 4:12	So then death operates in us, but life in you.

Day 1

1 Peter 2:21	For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered on your behalf, leaving you a model so that you may follow in His steps.
Galatians 2:20	I am crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.
Galatians 4:19	My children, with whom I travail again in birth until Christ is formed in you,

- I. In God's economy we are not only eaters of the tree of life, but we are also branches of this tree, and we may eventually become a small tree of life, a reproduction of Christ as the tree of life—1 Pet. 2:21; John 1:4; 12:24; 15:1, 4-5:**
- A. God's intention is that all the believers in Christ become a reproduction of Christ, the God-man—12:24; Rom. 8:29:
1. Becoming a reproduction of Christ requires that we be reborn of the pneumatic Christ in our spirit and then be gradually transformed by the pneumatic Christ in our soul—John 3:6; 2 Cor. 3:18.
 2. We become Christ's reproduction by a process that involves the riches of the divine life being dispensed into us and experienced by us—Eph. 3:8; Col. 3:4, 10-11.
 3. In order to become a reproduction of Christ as our model, we need to experience Christ as the One living in us, being formed in us, and making His home in our hearts—Gal. 2:20; 4:19; Eph. 3:16-17a.
 4. As we become a reproduction of Christ, spontaneously we will live Christ by the bountiful supply of His Spirit—Phil. 1:19, 21.
- B. In Genesis 2:9 the tree of life was unique, but the tree of life has been planted into us and is growing in us, causing us to become a small tree of life.

Colossians 2:19 says that we are growing with the growth of God. This verse indicates that **our God who is living in us is growing**. In Himself He does not need to grow, for in Himself He is perfect and complete. **Yet in us He needs to grow**. He has been within many of us for years, but we may not allow Him to grow. I have seen some children who were so small at their birth that they had to be put into an incubator. However, from the time of their birth they lived in a situation and environment that fit in with their growth in every aspect. As a result, they grew to be very strong. In the same way, we need to **give God a situation and environment that are fitting for Him to grow in us**.

The growth of a plant depends on the environment in which it is placed. A plant in the shade may grow and yet bear no blossoms, whereas the same kind of plant placed in the sunshine may grow and produce many blossoms. In order to grow properly, plants also need to be in an environment where there is water and fresh air. Do we give our God the adequate environment for Him to grow in us? (*The Organic Union in God's Relationship with Man, chapter 4*)

Day 2

1 John 5:11-12 And this is the testimony, that God gave to us eternal life and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.

1 John 5:16 If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin not unto death, he shall ask and he will give life to him, to those sinning not unto death. There is a sin unto death; I do not say that he should make request concerning that.

II. As a reproduction of Christ as the tree of life, we have the **ministry of life**—1 John 5:16; 2 Cor. 4:12:

- A. Because we are believers in Christ and children of God, we not only have eternal life and may experience eternal life, but we also can **minister this life to other members of the Body of Christ**—1 John 5:11-16.
- B. To minister life is to **impart life**; when we have a surplus of life, we can minister from this supply to others—1:1-2; 2:25; 5:11-13, 16.

Day 3

John 15:4-5 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. 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.

- C. The service in the church is a life-ministering service—a service of **supplying others with the divine life**—2 Cor. 4:12:
 1. We need to be impressed with this point and look to the Lord that **our service would become an outlet for His life**—John 11:25; 1 John 1:2.
 2. The **life that we supply to others is in the Spirit**, the Spirit is mingled with our spirit, and the life of God is located, abides, and grows in the mingled spirit—1 Cor. 15:45b; 6:17; Rom. 8:4:
 - a. If we would supply the saints with life, **we must release our spirit**, for the divine life is in our mingled spirit—7:6; 1:9.
 - b. If our spirit **cannot** be released, the divine life has **no way** to be released—8:10.
- D. If we would live as a reproduction of Christ as the tree of life, we need to be deeply impressed with the **necessity of being able to minister life**—1 John 5:11-16:
 1. The service that God wants from us does not focus on doing a work but on **ministering life**—v. 16.
 2. In order to minister life to others, we need to be **joined to Christ, abide in Christ, and give Him the ground** in us to fill us so that His life, nature, likes, and inclination become our life, nature, likes, and inclination—2:27; Eph. 3:16-17.

Those who serve the Lord must be clear that every service should **supply life**. The elders should not think that their responsibility in the church is merely to handle business affairs and manage matters. The elders should not say that as long as they manage matters and handle business affairs properly, their service is adequate. The deacons should not say that their service is complete after they finish taking care of the business affairs. **The church service is to supply life, for it is a service of life**. If we merely handle business affairs or manage matters but do not supply others with the life of God, our service is a failure and is vain. We should never think that only those who minister the word are the ones who supply life but that the service of the elders or deacons is merely to handle business affairs and to manage matters. Such a concept is wrong and needs to be corrected.

Every service, whether preaching the gospel, giving messages, managing business affairs, or visitation, that is, whether the service is spiritual or administrative, should be a **means for us to supply the life that we have received**. Preaching the gospel is for the supply of life. Ministering the word is for the supply of life. Visitation is for the supply of life, and serving in the church business office is for the supply of life. Even ordinary things, such as sweeping and cleaning the windows, are a means to supply life. Apparently, there are many items in the church service, but spiritually, these many items have **one purpose, which is to supply life**. (*The Service for Building Up the House of God, chapter 4*)

Day 4

2 Corinthians 4:16 Therefore we do not lose heart; but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.

2 Corinthians 4:12 So then death operates in us, but life in you.

- E. To **minister life** is to have the **outflow of life**; our service is God's flowing out to **supply others with the divine life**—John 19:34; 7:37-39:
1. Life is the content of God and the flowing out of God; God's content is God's being, and God's flowing out is the **impartation of Himself as life to us**—Eph. 4:18; Rev. 22:1.
 2. In order for life to be released from our spirit, **our outer man must be dealt with and broken**—2 Cor. 4:16; Heb. 4:12:
 - a. If our outer man is not broken, there **cannot** be a pure flow of the divine life—John 7:38.
 - b. If we want the divine life to be released from within us, we must be **subdued in our soul and let our spirit dominate** and rule over every matter; then the Lord's life will be able to flow out—Eph. 3:16-17.

Some people live in the mind, others have a strong will, and there are those who are full of emotion. If we want to know the kind of person that we are, we should check what part of our being is the first to respond when we encounter something. If our mind responds first, we live in the mind. If our emotion responds first, we are emotional persons. If our will responds first, we are men of will. When a face hits a wall, the nose gets hit first because it is the foremost part of a face. Similarly, if a brother lives in his mind, those who contact him will touch his mind, his strongest part. If a brother has a very strong will, others will touch his will, his strongest part. If a sister is an emotional person, others will touch her emotions, her strongest part. Whether or not we are broken can be determined by how we respond to things.

In order for the Lord's life to be released from within us, we must learn to fellowship with the Lord, be subdued in our soul, and let our spirit dominate and rule over every matter. Whether we are elders or deacons or are involved in visitation or preaching the gospel, we must learn to use our spirit and to subdue our mind, emotion, and will so that we touch things with our spirit. Then the Lord's life will be able to flow out. Our supplying others with life does not depend on our doing things properly but on our exercising our spirit. (*The Service for Building Up the House of God, chapter 4*)

Day 5

- Exodus 17:6** I will be standing before you there upon the rock in Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it so that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel.
- John 19:34** But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately there came out blood and water.
- John 7:38** He who believes into Me, as the Scripture said, out of his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.

3. Having the outflow of life requires that **we be one with Christ in His life-releasing death**; this is to be identified with the smitten Christ typified by the smitten rock—John 19:34; Exo. 17:6:
- When we are **one with Christ** as the smitten rock, the divine life as the **living water flows out of us**—v. 6; John 7:38.
 - Our human life, our natural life, **must be smitten** so that the **living water may flow out from within us**—2 Cor. 4:10-11, 16.
 - If we are one with the smitten Christ, we will experience the crucifixion of our natural life, and then as Christ's divine life flowed out as living water through the smiting of His human life, we also will **experience the flow of the water of life through the smiting of our natural life**—vv. 10-12.

The more we experience the consuming, the putting to death, of the outward man, **the more our inward man is renewed**. Our regenerated spirit with our renewed mind, emotion, and will needs to be resurrected, developed, enlarged, and refreshed. Therefore, **as the outward man is being consumed, the inward man is being resurrected, renewed, and developed**.

The **life that can carry out the ministry of the new covenant is a life of having the outward man put to death and the inward man renewed and resurrected**. Actually this kind of life is the new covenant ministry. This life and this ministry are needed for the Lord's recovery today. Only this kind of ministry can impart life to others, can minister Christ to others as the life-giving Spirit and as righteousness. Gifts, ability, energetic activity, diligent works—none of this avails. The only thing needed is a crucified life, the life with the outward man continually experiencing the putting to death of Jesus so that the inward parts of our being may rise up, be refreshed, and be developed.

I hope that we all shall be impressed with the fact that the new covenant ministry is not a matter of talent or ability. This ministry is altogether a **matter of life**. In this kind of life the natural being is put to death so that the spiritual being may be resurrected, renewed, and developed. This life is needed in a crucial way for the Lord's recovery today. (*Life-study of Second Corinthians, chapter 35*)

Day 6

- Matthew 16:18** And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.
- 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;
- Philippians 1:25** And being confident of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy of the faith,

- F. If we would minister life to others, we need to be aware of the **attack upon the church by death**, the gates of Hades—Matt. 16:18; Rom. 5:17:
1. What is of **God** is characterized by **life**, and what is of **Satan**, by **death**; in the church everything that issues from God is life, and everything that issues from Satan is death—John 11:25; Heb. 2:14.
 2. Satan's greatest fear with regard to the church is her **resistance** to his power of death—2 Tim. 1:10.
 3. The **eternal life within us can overcome death** both in ourselves and in other members of the church—1 John 5:11-13, 16.
 4. As a reproduction of Christ as the tree of life, we need to experience eternal life and minister this life to others by **being a channel through which eternal life can flow**—John 7:37-39; Phil. 1:24-25.

In the church life we do not live alone. Because the church is the Body, we live with the fellow members of the Body. Since we are in the Body, we are members with the other fellow members. Eternal life not only takes care of our own need; it also takes care of the need of the fellow members around us. **It overcomes death within us, and it overcomes death within our brothers.** Especially, it overcomes death in those who are weak or who have problems.

Weakness is related to death, and problems come from **death**. As long as there are problems in the church life, this is an indicator that there is death among those in the church. Therefore, **we need eternal life to overcome, to swallow up, this death.** If you are stronger and a fellow member is weaker, then you may become the one to supply the life from within you to the weaker one in order to swallow up the death within him.

Now we can understand why verse 14 begins with “and.” Let us read verses 13 and 14a again: *“I write these things to you that you may know that you have eternal life, to you who believe in the name of the Son of God. And this is the boldness which we have toward Him.”* Apparently, the first part of verse 14 is not fitting or logical. But if we touch the burden in the writer's spirit, we shall see that his intention is to show us not **only that we have eternal life, but also that this eternal life within us overcomes death and swallows it up.** (*Life-study of First John, chapter 37*)