

Grace Bible Church
Robert R. McLaughlin Bible Ministries

The Tree of Life is a weekly teaching summary.
The Tree of Life from the week ending 01/25/09
What is fragrant aroma of the Cross in our walk?

Watchman Nee founded indigenous churches in China in the mid-twentieth century. Eventually he was imprisoned by the communists in China, and spent the last twenty years of his life in prison. Here is the statement he made: "God measures everything, from start to finish, by the perfections of His Son." All of the things we will talk about concerning the Christian Sit, the Christian Walk, and the Christian Stand are captured in this great statement. God measures everything, from start to finish, by the perfections of His Son. You should realize that as a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ you now share completely in those same perfections. Seeing this for real will open up your awareness of those deep streams of peace in your soul.

In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace which He lavished on us. In all wisdom and insight He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth. In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will, (Eph 1:4-11).

In Ephesians we have Chapters 1 - 3 which is the doctrinal section. It deals with our so-great salvation and the doctrines of election and redemption, our position in Christ, and so much more. Chapter 4 - 6 are the more practical side of the epistle. This section presents the normal Christian response to learning and understanding all we are in Christ. It deals with Christian conduct in light of our so-great salvation. This half of the epistle can be further subdivided into two parts according to its subject matter. The first part deals with our life in the midst of this world; the second concerns our conflict with Satan and the kingdom of darkness. The first part of the letter reveals our life in Christ to be one of union with Him in the highest heavens. The second half shows us in very practical terms how such a heavenly life is to be lived by us down here on earth. It turns out that each section furnishes us with a key word that expresses the main idea of that section. In the first section of the letter (Eph 1:1 – 3:21) can be represented by the word "sit."

But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them. (Eph 2:4-10)

The second part of the letter (Eph 4:1-6:9) can be represented by the word "walk."

Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. (Eph 4:1-3)

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Here we are challenged to develop a way of life that is in keeping with our high calling and position in Christ.

Actually there is a third part (Eph 6:10-24) which can be represented by the word "stand."

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

So again we have:

- 1) Our Position in Christ - "sit" (Eph 2:6).
2. Our Life in the World - "walk" (Eph 4:1).
3. Our Attitude to the Enemy - "stand" (Eph 6:11).

Our spiritual life continually presents us with these three relationships: To the Lord, to other people, and to the kingdom of darkness. The Word of God, and the Holy Spirit, serve to bring us to a more full capacity to function well in all three relationships. When we are lacking in one or more of the legs of the stool, that's when we find ourselves falling apart. We can take these three key words to heart and learn about the importance of these three aspects of our spiritual life.

There is the Cross of Sit. **Therefore when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!" And He bowed His head and gave up His spirit (John 19:30).**

There is the Cross of Walk. **And He was saying to them all, " If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me (Luk 9:23).**

There is the Cross of Stand. **Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation (1Pe 4:12-13).**

We have seen that Christianity begins not with a big DO, but with a big DONE! Satan, the accuser of the brethren, is not accusing believers of sinning, but rather he accuses us of not resting in our position in Christ, of not believing the promises, of not enjoying all that God has already given us! Sit down and enjoy what God has done for you! Don't insult Him by thinking you're going to strive to accomplish for yourself what has so pleased Him to freely give you! The Christian life is based on the fact that from start to finish we are completely dependent on the Lord Jesus Christ! The grace that God wants to shower upon us is unlimited! Read the book of Ephesians for yourself and see how often words like full, fullness, riches, abundant are found, especially in the first three chapters!

In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace which He lavished on us. In all wisdom and insight He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth. (Eph 1:7-10)

I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not

only in this age but also in the one to come. And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all. But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. (Eph 1:18-2:7)

To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ, and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God who created all things; so that the manifold [many-faceted] wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places. (Eph 3:8-10)

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God. Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen. (Eph 3:14-21)

When we walk, or stand, we bear the weight of our own body on our legs. When we sit down our entire weight is held up by the chair we sit down in. When we walk we get tired, but when we sit, we relax and rest. The strain no longer falls on our muscles and nerves, but instead falls on something outside of ourselves. In the spiritual realm, sitting means that we take the weight we have been carrying and we hoist it on the shoulders of the Lord. **"Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Matt 11:29 "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. Matt 11:30 "For My yoke is easy and My burden is light" (Mat 11:28-30).** To sit means to take your problems, future, failures and insecurities, your worst fear, guilt, greatest challenges, all your responsibilities, and cast them all upon the Lord. Our Lord finished the work on the Cross; God has done everything in Christ, and you are in Christ! Now you can simply live in that fact by faith and enjoy what He has already accomplished for you. He brings us the finished work of His Son, and gives it to us as a gift, and then He invites us to sit.

The Christian way of life is this wonderful story where day by day, through storms and trials, great joy and amazing surprises, the Lord works out the details of your life. He unravels before your spiritual eyes the things He has prepared for you since before the foundation of the world. God is so wealthy that His chief delight is to give. If you who are evil know how to give good things to your children, how much more your Father in heaven? His treasures are so vast that it is pain to Him when we refuse Him an opportunity of lavishing those treasures upon us. It was the father's joy that he could find in the prodigal an applicant for the robe, the ring, the shoes, and the feast; it was his sorrow that in the elder son he found no such applicant. It is a grief to the heart of God when we try to provide things for Him. It gives Him true joy when we just let Him give to us. It is a grief to Him when we try to do things for Him, for He is so very, very able. He longs that we will just let Him do. He wants to be the Giver eternally, and He wants to be the Doer eternally. If only we saw how rich and how great He is, we would leave all the giving and all the doing to Him.

God measures everything from start to finish, by the perfections of His Son. All of the things we will talk about concerning the Christian Sit, the Christian Walk, and the Christian Stand are captured in this great statement. God measures everything, from start to finish, by the perfections of His Son. So should you. This means that we learn how to operate in the tenth problem solving device, occupation with the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. You should realize too that as a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ you now share completely in those same perfections. Seeing this for real will open up your awareness of those deep streams of peace in your soul. The Word of God, and the Holy Spirit, serve to bring us to a more full capacity to function well in all three relationships. When we are lacking in one or more of the legs of the stool, that's when we find ourselves falling apart. The same Lord that told you to pick up your cross and follow Him, is the One who also said to cast your burdens on Him, the same One who said:

We are people of the Cross whether we like it or not! The Church is born crucified. **Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life (Rom 6:4).** Notice the transition from sitting (positional truth) to walking. In the book of Ephesians, at the beginning of chapter 5, we see the Cross come on the scene. Our Lord Jesus Christ on the Cross provided the one offering for sin, and it has never to be repeated. It is finished. Yet this same Lord still commands us to pick up our cross and follow Him. We are searching out, and trying to understand, what this cross is all about and how it relates to His Cross. **Every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time onward until His enemies be made a footstool for His feet. For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified (Heb 10:11-14).** Here is the cross of sitting, here is the offering for sins.

Our sacrifices of love cannot be for the purpose of taking away sins. Hasn't the Father made it clear even in the Old Testament, in Hosea, that He was not after simply the sacrifice itself, that something else was involved? **Come, let us return to the LORD. For He has torn us, but He will heal us; He has wounded us, but He will bandage us. He will revive us after two days; He will raise us up on the third day, That we may live before Him. So let us know, let us press on to know the LORD. His going forth is as certain as the dawn; And He will come to us like the rain, Like the spring rain watering the earth. What shall I do with you, O Ephraim? What shall I do with you, O Judah? For your loyalty is like a morning cloud. And like the dew which goes away early. Therefore I have hewn them in pieces by the prophets; I have slain them by the words of My mouth; And the judgments on you are like the light that goes forth. For I delight in loyalty rather than sacrifice, And in the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings (Hos 6:1-6).**

He desired something else. **Therefore, when He comes into the world, He says, "Sacrifice and offering You have not desired, But a body You have prepared for Me; In whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You have taken no pleasure. Then I said, 'Behold, I have come (In the scroll of the book it is written of Me) To do Your will, O God'" (Heb 10:5-7).** What else was the fragrant aroma? It was loyalty, the knowledge of God, Jesus Christ coming to do the will of His Father. It was the demonstrated understanding of Who His Father really was. The fragrant aroma that came to His nostrils that day included the aroma of Love. It was that mature virtuous love that casts out fear. It is that love which manifests itself in obedience. We can never provide the fragrant aroma of propitiation, nor do we need to, because Christ provided that once for all with his substitutionary spiritual death on the Cross. We can provide the Father the fragrant aroma of this mature virtue love that manifests itself in obedience. That is why we see in the book of Hebrews another kind of offering mentioned! **Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name. And do not neglect doing good and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is pleased (Heb 13:15-16).** Here we have this sacrifice, this offering, and it points to the Royal Family Honor Code. Picking up our cross daily means that we live in the Royal Family Honor Code. According to the instruction that God gave to Moses on Mount Sinai, the children of Israel were to offer sacrifices to God.

There were two kinds of sacrifices. First there were sacrifices that dealt with the problem of sin. These sacrifices arose because a person recognized the gulf that existed between him and God because of his guilt, and by blood he expressed his need for that gulf to be bridged so that he might enjoy fellowship with God and experience a conscience that was at rest from sin. There is no need for a believer in the Church Age to offer such sacrifices, because Christ, our Passover, has been sacrificed for us. By His death, He once for all has made a propitiation for sin that we might be received into God's presence as His children at the moment of salvation. The second kind of sacrifices were sacrifices that were brought for worship; sacrifices in which one whose sins had been covered by blood experienced a heart full of praise, thanksgiving, love, and devotion to God. God ordained that he could bring a sacrifice and place it on the altar, and it was accepted by God as praise and thanksgiving to His name. While the writer to the Hebrews has told us that all animal sacrifices have been done away because of the perfection of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, yet there are worship sacrifices that a believer may give to God to express his love, his devotion, his adoration, his praise, and his thanksgiving. It was those sacrifices that the writer referred to in Heb 13:15-16.

Abraham had his own walk with his son Isaac up Mount Moriah. **Now it came about after these things, that God tested Abraham, and said to him, " Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." He said, "Take now your son, your**

only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you" (Gen 22:1-2).

Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." He said, "Do not stretch out your hand against the lad, and do nothing to him; for now I know that you fear [respect & obey] God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me" (Gen 22:10-12).

At the Cross is the God-Man who loved us, and His Father, so much that He gave Himself up for the ones He loved. God loved the world so much that He gave. **Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma. (Eph 5:1-2)**