

**The Tree of Life is a weekly teaching summary.
The Tree of Life from the week ending 02/20/05**

**What it means to be initiated into the secret of the mystery. Part 5.
The mystery behind our Lord's answer to Peter.
John 13.**

We continue our study of the mystery doctrine of the Church-age with Joh 13:34-35, "*A **new** commandment I give to you, that you love one another with a virtue-love, even as I have loved you with virtue-love, that you also love one another with a virtue-love. By this [loving one another with virtue-love] all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have **virtue-love** for one another.*"

Our Lord is teaching that discipleship and love are related but **it is** the love of God not the **human love** of man that is in view. It is through discipleship or learning Bible doctrine that virtue-love is developed to the point where it can be released toward others. This *new commandment* is designed to meet the intensified stage of the angelic conflict.

The angelic conflict is the result of prehistoric creatures being in opposition to God. It began with the fall of Satan and continued until all angelic creatures had made a decision **for** or **against** God. The angelic conflict refers to the two trials of Satan and fallen angels: One took place in prehistoric times, the other is now taking place during human history. We live in the intensified stage of the angelic conflict which is the Church-age and Satan has an organization of fallen angels who are invisible and at work behind the scenes. Eph 6:12 says, *Our warfare is not against blood and flesh but against rulers [demon general officers], against authorities [demon officer corps], against world rulers of this darkness [demon ambassadors], against spirit forces of evil in the heavenlies [rank and file demons].*

During the Church-age, demon attacks on believers are limited to demon influence. This happens, not by the fallen angels flying through the atmosphere and throwing thoughts at you, but rather through whatever means that the kingdom of darkness can use to invade your system of thinking and get you out of the Plan of God. 1Ti 4:1-2, *But the Spirit explicitly teaches that in latter periods of time some believers will **withdraw** from doctrine, concentrating on deceitful spirits and the doctrines from demons, by means of hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron.*

Negative volition toward Bible doctrine creates a vacuum in the soul which sucks in all the false concepts from the world system, developed by Satan, for believers to become **distracted** from the plan of God. This is why we are told in 2Co 2:11, *In order that no advantage be taken of us by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his schemes.* The implication is that Satan can very easily take advantage of us unless we understand his strategy and understand why we are here. Eph 6:11 says, *Pick up and put on the full armor from God, that you may be able to hold your ground against the schemes or the strategies of the devil.*

These verses indicate that Satan plans offensive action against the human race, especially against believers. Satan's offensive action demands, on our part, dependence on the Lord and the wall of fire.

In the Church-age, the angelic conflict is intensified. All the issues of the angelic conflict will be resolved before the resurrection of the Church. Therefore, the Church-age is the most difficult and yet the most exciting time in all of history. With doctrine, the Church is the greatest power structure that has ever existed against Satan's rule of the earth. The Lord left behind the Church to challenge Satan and

He gave the church the potential to share in the victory that He won over the angelic conflict. In the Church-age, Jesus Christ is represented by the royal family of God on earth. In this way, we function as royal ambassadors within the PPOG. Our Lord will have representation on earth until the Second Advent when the devil's kingdom comes to an end. We are the very center of the angelic conflict.

Each of us has an invisible impact upon history and this impact is dependent upon our **routine**, our **daily perception of doctrine**. The winner believer demonstrates the validity of the sentence pronounced against the fallen angels in eternity past. The Church-age exists to challenge Satan during the absence of Christ from the earth. While Jesus Christ is seated at the right hand of the Father, the Church is to utilize divine power to overcome Satan's attacks.

Satan will do all he can to prohibit any believer from going forward and glorifying God. Satan's most successful ploys are to use friends, family, neighbors, enemies, fellow-workers, or other believers to hinder the **progress** of a believer. If a believer cannot handle people, he will get out of fellowship by allowing people to take him away from his relationship with God. Therefore, this new commandment *to love with an impersonal unconditional virtuous love* will solve people problems.

People problems can come in two categories:

1. In personal love or admiration. Here the object of your love often controls your life by providing much of your happiness or unhappiness, unless you have attained spiritual self-esteem, spiritual autonomy, or spiritual maturity. In wanting to please the object of your personal love, you find yourself being a different person and not following your normal function.
2. In personal hatred or animosity. Here the object of your antagonism or irritation often has control of your life and your happiness, unless you have advanced to one of the three stages of spiritual adulthood.

The solution to problems with people is found in the combination of personal love for God and impersonal love for all mankind. Without it, the believer will constantly surrender the control of his life to others.

When we can love with impersonal unconditional virtuous love, we have made the greatest stride in our spiritual life. This impersonal love is the most obscure and underrated factor in the spiritual life. It is obscure in the sense that most individuals don't even know what type of love it is, nor how to love with it. It is underrated in the sense that those who know that it exists do not really know its tremendous value.

So let's look at Joh 13:34 with some added definition so that we are sure that we understand what it is saying, *"A brand new command I give to you, that you impersonally unconditionally love one another, even as I have loved you with an impersonal unconditional virtuous love, that you also love one another with that impersonal unconditional virtuous love."*

We can have the love of God according to Rom 5:5 which says, *"the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us."* In 2Co 13:14 Paul said, *"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all."* Notice that the Love of God can be with you! 1Jo 2:5 says, *but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected.*

This may seem unrealistic to some but remember, the Christian way of life is a supernatural way of life and demands a supernatural means of execution Mat 17:20; Mat 19:26; Luk 18:27; Mar 9:23; Jer 32:17. This love is designed to give us the ability to overcome all the people distractions that the kingdom of darkness will try to distract us with. We should become very serious about developing impersonal unconditional love in our souls. Many believers waste their life away by worrying about people and what people are trying to do to them. They live in fear of people, when in reality, the only thing a believer should fear is standing embarrassed at the Judgment Seat of Christ by being evaluated as a loser by Him. History is a very short time compared to eternity and our time on earth is a drop in the bucket compared to eternity. If we

place other things in life above doctrine, we sacrifice all the equal privilege and opportunity that God has provided for us in time. Without that we cannot advance spiritually.

All **other things** will become meaningless in eternity, and at most will add up to regret. In eternity believers will realize that anything they considered more important than their relationship with God were not important at all. Although we can never lose our salvation, we can be a loser, as 1Jo 2:28 says, *And now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming.*

A part of *shrinking away from Him in shame at His coming* is to realize that you had an opportunity to make your life count in a fantastic way. Instead, you chose to follow the plan of Satan during your brief stay on this earth.

Beginning in Joh 13:36, we now have the four inquisitive disciples: Peter, Thomas, Philip and Jude.

Joh 13:36, *Simon Peter said to Him, "Lord, where are You going?" Jesus answered, "Where I go, you cannot follow Me now; but you shall follow later."*

The Lord is about to die for the sins of the whole world. Then He will be resurrected and will ascend into heaven to be seated at the right hand of the Father. TLJC is the only celebrity for all time.

Joh 13:37, *Peter said to Him, "Lord, why can I not follow You **right now**? I will lay down my life for You."*

Peter meant what he said and he had nothing but good intentions, however, he was following his emotions, and emotions have no character or integrity. Peter is saying, *I'll suffer instead of you.* He was very sincere, but very ignorant of doctrine and about the plan of God.

God the Father in His perfection designed a plan to save Peter, but Peter here is trying to save the Lord. The plan of God the Father also calls for Peter to represent the glorified Christ on earth as an apostle and ambassador and this plan cannot advance until the Lord is glorified. If Peter had just learned doctrine and accepted, it instead of living in his emotions, he would have heard our Lord say in Mar 10:45, *"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."*

So, in Joh 13:37, *Peter said to Him, "Lord, why can I not follow You right now? I will lay down my life for You."*

Peter's admirable motivation and good intentions are neutralized by ignorance of Bible doctrine. However, there is one thing about Peter, he is fearless. At least that is an admirable trait.

Notice the Lord's answer, Joh 13:38, *Jesus answered, "Will you lay down your life or your soul for Me? Truly, truly [point of doctrine], I say to you, a cock shall not crow, until you deny Me three times."*

Emotionalism and human good always lead to failure.

In the original language, there are no chapter breaks so that Joh 14:1 is actually a continuation of what our Lord said to Peter in 13:38. So we would read Joh 13:38, *Jesus answered, "Will you lay down your life for Me? Truly, truly, I say to you, a cock shall not crow, until you deny Me three times.* Then in Joh 14:1 *"Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me."* The Greek word for *be troubled* is *tarasso* which means to be confused, upset, distressed, discouraged, to be stirred up or disturbed in your thinking. It is in the imperative mood, which means that this is a command.

In other words, when you're discouraged, sometimes someone has to hit you with a command to get you up out of your self-pity and discouragement. This passage is saying, *do not become disturbed in your heart from your failure.*

This passage was not written for those who are bereaved. It is for believers when they hit bottom. Here is how the Apostle Paul put it (expanded translation) Phi 3:13-14, *Brethren [members of the Royal Family of God], I evaluate myself as not yet having attained the objective [ultra-supergrace or the ultimate objective in time, living in resurrection life] but one thing I concentrate upon: constantly forgetting the things that lie behind and pursuing vigorously to*

what lies ahead, I keep on pressing on toward the objective for the purpose of the reward belonging to the upward call of God [Father], by means of Christ Jesus.

Do not be distracted by your past success or your past failures. True happiness is concentration on things that are important. You do not forget the bad things that happen to you as a part of suffering for blessing as you advance to maturity. You must disregard them by not letting them become a distraction through the reaction of bitterness, self-pity, vindictiveness, implacability, etc. Past failure must never interfere with present momentum. As long as you are alive God has a plan and purpose for your life, therefore, rebound and keep moving.

If you are going to move forward, you cannot be distracted and that's what the Lord is teaching Peter. Three times within the next 10 hours Peter will deny Him, however, if Peter is going to move forward, he cannot be distracted by his failures and the same applies to us. The spiritual life is not designed to be **haunted** by past failures or past success.

So when Peter fails, the first command from the Lord is Joh 14:1 *"Let not your heart be troubled; and then notice a second imperative, believe in God,* This just doesn't mean to believe that God exists, Peter already believes that, but it means the inhale of Bible doctrine resulting in understanding the plan of the Father. After the resurrection Peter is going to have to recover and *believe God.*

So the Lord says in Joh 14:1-2, *"Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God, [and then a third command] believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you.*

Before dawn occurs, Peter will have denied the Lord 3 times and after that he goes out and weeps bitterly. That was the lowest moment in his life, the bitterness of his failure. The plan of God doesn't call for our success or sincerity but rather for our courage, dedication, commitment, and perseverance. There's only one way you can fail, and that is to quit.

God the Father has provided from eternity past everything we as believers would ever need to execute His perfect Plan for the Church-age. These provisions even include encouragement in times of adversity and failure. We derive encouragement from the mentorship of God the Holy Spirit as well as receiving encouragement from other believers who are filled with the Spirit and possess divine viewpoint from the Scriptures. We can receive encouragement simply by gathering together with other believers to hear the Word of God communicated by our divinely appointed pastor-teacher, 1Pe 5:3, Act 20:28.

For Peter, and those of us who may get discouraged by our failures, victory in failure comes from knowing Bible doctrine. The whole key to getting with the plan of God is knowledge of doctrine. There's no exception.

Even in denying the Lord, we don't lose our salvation, because of the immutable, eternal, infinite attributes of God. He cannot cancel the salvation of any believer, no matter how gross that believer may be. We do not keep ourselves from falling; God does so as a matter of grace. The perfect integrity of God cannot be canceled by the failure or renunciation of any believer living on earth. 2Ti 2:11-13, *Faithful is the word. If we died with Him [and we have], we shall live with Him. If we endure [in suffering for blessing], we shall rule with Him [as mature believers]. If we deny Him, He will deny us [rewards, escrow blessings]. If we are unfaithful [disbelieving, faithless], He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself."*

The fact that we are unfaithful and losers does not change the faithfulness of God. Every believer is indwelt by God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God cannot deny Himself since He indwells every believer. We are daily sustained and supported by the faithfulness of God, regardless of whether we are carnal or spiritual, winners or losers. God is faithful to all believers based on election. 1Co 1:9, *God is faithful, through Whom you have been called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.* There is no way God can ever be **faithless** to us.

In essence, our Lord said, "Peter (or any believer) when you fail remember the permanent dwelling place is still there." Our status has nor will ever change. When we fail in some big way,

it never changes our status. That eternal status doesn't depend on us, it never did, nor ever will. That's always a shock to people when they suddenly realize it doesn't depend on them at all!

God's plan is greater than our old sin natures, it's greater than our failures. This plan is greater than our human good, and greater than our sincerity. God's plan is infinitely greater than any human motivation and human viewpoint.

The Lord says, "You may blow it, many times, but you never ever change your status in eternity. It doesn't depend on you, you received at least 40 things at the point of salvation (including eternal security), that you will always have."

Joh 14:2, *In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. Our Lord is saying, Alright Peter, if there's something you could do to lose your salvation, I would have leveled with you.*

We can fall from grace which means to operate under legalism, not to lose one's salvation, Gal 5:4, *You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.*

Falling from grace is simply not operating in the sphere of grace. TLJC said in verse 2, *I'd level with you, if there is something you could do to lose your salvation, it would be in black and white, it would be clear, I tell you Peter, but there isn't, you can't lose it.*

Then TLJC says something very interesting to Peter. He begins to brief Peter on the plan, *"I go to prepare a place for you,"*

To fulfill the next step on the agenda of the plan of the Father, the Lord is going to have to go to heaven. This means His death, burial, resurrection, and ascension. The Lord reveals to Peter that He will travel from one place to another to prepare a permanent place for you.

The plan says go to the cross. The plan says die twice. The plan says resurrect your body and fulfill the ascension and session. God's plan moves right along, regardless of Peter's failures or any of our own. The place that Jesus Christ is going to prepare doesn't depend on Peter's success or failure, but it depends on the character and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

By His death on the cross, Jesus Christ has propitiated (satisfied) the Father. He has reconciled Peter, and he has procured the right for every believer to live in heaven forever. All this is a grace gift, regardless of whether we fail or succeed in this life. TLJC is going to the "Father's house" which is the third heaven and He's going to prepare a permanent place for Peter, the other apostles, and for every member of the human race who would believe on Him for eternal life.

Joh 14:3, *"And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also."*

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