The Tree of Life is a weekly teaching summary.
The Tree of Life from the week ending 12/12/04

The Zoe Life
The Peace Which Surpasses All Understanding
John 14:6

Philippians 4:10-12 Now, I have received much inner happiness by means of the Lord greatly, that now at length you have revived your concern [thinking] for me; indeed, you also were thinking about me, but you lacked the opportunity to express it. [We now have the correct interpretation of history, and what it means to be on the right side of history and accept your calling and place in life.] Not that I speak from want; for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need.

Through his faithfulness to Bible doctrine, Paul has learned a tremendous lesson—how to be content in all circumstances. We all need to be reminded how important Bible doctrine is, and understand what the Lord Jesus Christ meant when He said in Joh 14:6, “I am the way [entrance], and the truth [doctrine], and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me.” The “way” refers to the entrance into the plan of God; the “truth” refers to what we learn after we enter into the plan of God; the “life” is the function that comes out of that truth, or doctrine.

This is the life of Phi 4:11, “Not that I speak from want; for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am.” True contentment is a real, active virtue; it is the power of deriving as much as possible from any situation. A contented person can be happy with what appears to be useless.

There are two Greek words translated “life” in the New Testament; zoe (the origin of “zoology”) and bios (the origin of “biology”). Zoe means the function of life, and bios means the pattern of life. Zoe refers to the supergrace life, which is the objective of all the doctrine we learn. The zoe life is God’s fantastic grace provisions, which are far beyond even your most fervent prayers. The Lord Jesus Christ said in Joh 10:10, “The thief comes only to steal, and kill, and destroy; I came that they might have [zoe] life, and might have it abundantly.” Paul wrote in 1Co 2:9, “However, as it stands written, ‘No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love Him.’” No matter how wild and seemingly impossible your dreams may be, God has provided something far greater than any thinking or imagination you have ever had.

The zoe-life is the direct result of fulfilling the life beyond gnosis (knowledge); it is one thing to know something, it is another to experience it. This zoe-life, a life filled with inner happiness and contentment, means we are free from worry, anxiety, and frustration. We “have learned” to remain confident; we have tranquility of soul, and we are being refreshed daily. It is a manifestation of the glory of God within us. When believers reveal the glory of God, there will be one basic characteristic and quality that
follows them wherever they go—the zoe-life, a life filled with inner happiness and contentment, which is alive in them. They are now have “life abundantly.”

In Gal 6:14-16, Paul wrote, “But may it never be that I should boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. And those who will walk by this rule, peace, and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.” Paul was living in the new creature under the filling of the Spirit, but still desired to attain this zoe-life in time. The experience of this life in time is a reward for living the ultimate spiritual life.

A believer at any stage can live the spiritual life, using some or even all of the problem-solving devices. However, this zoe-life can be experienced as a reward only by those willing to live the spiritual life by sticking with the plan of God. God not only rewards those who diligently seek Him in the eternal state, but He also rewards them in time, Heb 11:6, Mar 10:30. This may not necessarily be through materialism and overt prosperity, but through the experience of this zoe-life, a life filled with inner happiness and contentment.

We can think like the Lord Jesus Christ and reach a state of total reward in our mental attitude from the fulfillment of the plan of God. We will still sin and fail, but will experience times when the peace of God is such a reality in our lives that our difficulties have no control over us. Paul put it this way in Gal 6:8, “For the one who sows to his own flesh shall from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit shall reap eternal [zoe] life.”

The verb “to sow” is the present active participle form of the verb speiro, which means to sow, to invest one’s time, and to invest one’s life. If we keep on living the spiritual life, we will keep on reaping more and more of the experience of our eternal life in time, that is, the zoe-life. We see different manifestations of spiritual growth at spiritual self-esteem, spiritual autonomy, and spiritual maturity. It begins at spiritual self-esteem with characteristics such as the following:

1. Tranquility of soul. You begin to relax in your soul; in spite of the pressure on you, you have a relaxed mental attitude.
2. Stability of mental attitude. You do not feel threatened by others or fall into inordinate ambition and competition.
3. Composure marked by self-assurance, which is the correct and accurate application of doctrine to life.
4. Grace orientation to life, which includes mercy toward yourself when you fail and giving others the benefit of the doubt.
5. Doctrinal orientation to reality, which is based upon genuine humility, objectivity, teachability, spiritual common sense, and the avoidance of inordinate ambition and competition or inordinate self-esteem.
6. Good decisions from a position of strength, which includes motivation from personal love for God the Father and divine viewpoint thinking.
7. Personal control of your life.
8. A personal sense of destiny, which includes solving the problems related to God, self, others, and things.
9. Self-confidence from wisdom, which means the function of doctrinal purity or the application of metabolized doctrine to experience.
10. Poise. This is the believer under spiritual self-command. All these characteristics improve and become stronger in the next stages of spiritual growth. When a believer reaches spiritual maturity, and goes on to supergrace and ultra-supergrace, then he will have the privilege of experiencing the zoe-life, a life filled with inner happiness and contentment. Or Lord did not teach that if we believe in Him and then we die, then we will have eternal life—He prophesied that we could have this life now! He declared in Joh 5:24, “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life”; and in Joh 7:38-39, “He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, ‘From his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.’ But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.” As we walk in dependence upon the Spirit, He will cause this zoe-life to flow through us as rivers of living water.

The Holy Spirit may seem to be slow, and at times even inactive in our lives. But that is never the case; even when He is grieved or quenched, He is at work within us, Phi 2:13-14, “For it is God [the Holy Spirit] who is at work in you, both to will [give you proper motivation] and to work [give you the ability to execute] above and beyond His good pleasure. Keep on doing all things without complaining, grumbling or arguing.” If we only knew the magnitude of the desires of God for our lives, we would relax and enjoy every day, living one day at a time.

1Co 2:10-16 For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man, which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. [Who knows what you’re thinking and planning except you yourself?] Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God [God offers us a full report on His gifts of life and salvation], which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words. But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. [There is no capacity in the natural man to know the zoe-life; it appears as silliness to him because he does not have the ability to understand it.] But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no man. For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he should instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ.

Those of us who are spiritually alive have access to everything God’s Spirit is doing, and we cannot be judged by unspiritual critics. This zoe-life, the life of inner happiness, is rejected by the unbeliever, and most believers are also ignorant of it. We would not have any doubts or wonder about the power of the work of Holy Spirit in our lives if we knew the eternal heights of this zoe-life! It is no wonder that the Apostle Paul said in Rom 11:33, “Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who became His counselor? Or who has first given to Him that it might be paid back to him again? For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.”

The Word of God transforms us, 2Co 3:17-18, “Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face beholding
as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.” We are advancing from “glory to glory.” As the Holy Spirit transforms us into the image of our Lord, giving us the opportunity to have this fantastic life in time, our self-perception continues to decrease, and we have a much greater perception of God in our lives. There will be less concentration upon self and more upon God and the real reason we have been created.

Only a few believers will, quietly and calmly, continue to seek after God in this manner, and be able to say with the Apostle Paul, “I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am.” Usually they are believers who are hidden behind the scenes—humble, unnoticed, unrewarded, and expecting nothing, except that the Creator be blessed, and not the creature.

Before a believer can attain this contentment, the manifestations of experiencing this life in time, there comes an important revelation. We could call it an infusion of divine justice—the mature believer realizes that whatever the Lord does in his life, it is just. This believer is being prepared for something. He is being prepared to face what is before him without reservation and without any definite view in mind as to what the outcome will be. He accepts whatever God sees fit to do.

It is not difficult to identify the power of zoe-life; it is the power of love, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, and self-control, Gal 5:22-23. There is a difference experientially between believing on the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation and believing upon His Word to experience this zoe-life. Anyone who believes in Christ alone by faith alone is saved and will go to heaven and experience eternal life for all eternity, Act 16:31. Those who keep on believing on Him, by following His Word and applying it to their lives, will have the privilege of experiencing zoe life in time.

1. The zoe-life is only found in Christ and gives us guidance and direction in this life, Joh 1:4. There is no confusion or boredom in the zoe-life.
2. This life is made available to anyone who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ, Joh 3:15.
3. This life fulfills the desires found in all of us, Joh 4:14.
4. This life is made available to us in time, not beginning in eternity, Joh 5:24.
5. This life is given to us through the intake of doctrine, Joh 6:27.
6. This life is given in measure depending upon the believer’s desire for it, Joh 10:10.
7. This life can never be taken away, Joh 10:28-30.
8. This life is described in Joh 17:3 as “knowing” God and the Lord Jesus Christ.
9. It is through the written communication of Bible doctrine that this life is offered to every member of the human race, Joh 20:31.

Before Paul died, he made a great statement in 1Ti 6:12, “Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called, and you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.” The key here is the verb “take hold,” the aorist middle imperative form of the verb epilambanomai, which is epilabou. This verb means to take hold, to seize, to grasp, to obtain, to be concerned with, and to take interest in; here it means to take hold of what eternal life has to offer. This is to seize all the blessings and benefits associated with eternal life in time. We are to seize these things and do it now because the only time we can seize these things is in time. “Now” is your only chance to receive spiritual blessings, which means maximum awareness of the zoe-life, in which you savor every moment of life, whether in adversity or prosperity. You have zest for life and an enjoyment of every moment of life, regardless of what it brings.
As long as you are on this earth as a believer, you have the *opportunity* of receiving all that God has offered to you as a part of your eternal life. However, this cannot happen when you reject or neglect doctrine. The fantastic decorations and blessings that the believer will receive for becoming a winner in time are beyond human description and comprehension. Running the race set before you is the road to being a winner in eternity.

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