

## TWO PRINCIPLES OF LIVING<sup>1</sup>

**Gen. 2: 16-17** And Jehovah God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden you may eat freely, But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, of it you shall not eat; for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.

The Word of God tells us that he who eats of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil shall surely die, while he who eats of the tree of life shall live. God also shows us that whoever lives by the knowledge of good and evil will lose his position before God. If man wants to constantly live before God, then he must know what it means to eat the fruit of the tree of life. These two trees represent two principles of living. After becoming Christians, some people live by the principle of right and wrong, while others live by the principle of life.

### THE PRINCIPLE OF RIGHT AND WRONG

If our conduct is controlled by the principle of right and wrong, then we ask if something is right or wrong whenever we have to make a decision. Would it be good to do this, or would it be evil? God's Word says, "The tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Gen. 2: 17). At the most this practice is only a discerning of good from evil. At best, it is merely choosing and rejecting—choosing good and rejecting evil.

### THE PRINCIPLE OF LIFE: A STANDARD HIGHER THAN THE STANDARD OF GOOD

On the contrary, whenever we do anything, there is a life within us which rises up to speak with us. When we feel right inwardly, when we feel the life inside of us moving, when we are strong within and sense the anointing, we know that we have life. Many times something is right and good in the eyes of man, but strangely the inner life has no response and grows cold and retreats. Please remember, God's Word tells us that our Christian living is based on an inner life, not an outward standard of right or wrong. Many worldly people, who are not saved, live according to the best standard of living they can attain: the principle of right and wrong. If you or I also live by the principle of right or wrong, we are the same as worldly people (pp. 420-422). God said, "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, of it you shall not eat; for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die." Note that "good and evil" are put together here as one way, while "life" is another way. Christians should not just refuse evil, they should even refuse good. There is a standard that is higher than the standard of good; it is the standard of life.

### "HEAR HIM"

On the Mount of Transfiguration, Moses was present, representing the outward, moral standard, and Elijah was present, representing the outward, human standard (Matt. 17: 3). God told Peter, "This is My Son, the Beloved... Hear Him!" (v.5). Today the standard for Christian living is no longer the law, nor is it the prophets. The standard for Christian living is now Christ Himself; it is the indwelling Christ within us. Therefore, it is not a question of whether we are right or wrong but of whether or not the divine life in us agrees with something.

### THE DIVINE LIFE MUST BE SATISFIED

Man says that right is good enough, but God says that only life is sufficient. We must do things to the point that joy and peace are produced inwardly. This is the difference between the way of life and the way of right and wrong. It seems as if right and wrong are sufficient and that nothing else is needed. But God is not satisfied with being right. He requires us to satisfy the divine life. For example, what does the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7 teach us? It teaches us nothing less than that being right is not enough. Many people say that Matthew 5-7 is too difficult for them. I admit that it is. It is impossible for us to carry out Matthew 5-7. If we try, we will die because we cannot do it. However, we have another life within us. It tells us that we will not be happy if we do not do this. It does not matter how much we have been offended by a brother or sister. If we do not kneel down to pray for him or her, we will not have inward joy. It is good to endure in silence, but if we do not follow the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount, we will not have inward joy. The Sermon on the Mount teaches that we must satisfy the life of God within us. In doing these things, the divine life is satisfied, released, at peace, and happy.

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<sup>1</sup> From *The Collected Work of Watchman Nee*, Vol. 56, pp. 418-427