

**Outline of
the Messages for the Full-time Training
in the Spring Term of 2016**

**GENERAL SUBJECT:
THE TREE OF LIFE**

Message Fifteen

**Experiencing Christ as the Tree of Life
under the Government of God by the Grace of God
to Become the Reproduction of Christ for God's Building**

Scripture Reading: 1 Pet. 1:2-3, 8; 2:2-5, 9, 21, 24; 3:7; 2 Pet. 1:1-4

- I. The tree of life is the crucified and resurrected Christ, who is in the church, the consummation of which will be the New Jerusalem, in which the crucified and resurrected Christ will be the tree of life for the nourishment of all God's redeemed people for eternity—1 Pet. 1:8; 2:24; Rev. 2:7; 22:2, 14.**
- II. The Epistles of 1 and 2 Peter are on the universal government of God:**
 - A. The subject of 1 Peter is the Christian life under the government of God, showing us the government of God, especially in His dealings with His chosen people—1:2.
 - B. The subject of 2 Peter is the divine provision and the divine government, showing us that as God is governing us, He supplies us with whatever we need—1:1-4; 3:13.
 - C. The preciousness of Peter's writings is that he combines the Christian life and God's government, revealing that the Christian life and the government of God go together—1 Pet. 1:17; 2:21, 24; 3:15; 4:17; 5:5-8.
 - D. Although the subject of 1 and 2 Peter is God's government, this is not the central focus and basic structure of the Epistles:
 1. Everything concerning God's government should bring us back to the central focus and basic structure of these Epistles—the Triune God as our full enjoyment—1 Pet. 1:2-3.
 2. The central focus and basic structure of 1 and 2 Peter are the energizing Triune God operating to accomplish His complete salvation so that we may be regenerated, feed on His word, grow and be transformed, and be built up in order that He may have a dwelling place and that we may be glorified to express Him—1 Pet. 1:23; 2:1-5, 9.
- III. As believers in Christ, we may become a reproduction of Christ as our model—v. 21:**
 - A. The living of the Lord Jesus under the government of God is a model so that we may follow in His steps by becoming His reproduction—vv. 21-23; Eph. 4:20-21.

- B. We become Christ's reproduction by a process that involves the riches of the divine life being dispensed into us and experienced by us—3:8.
- C. 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.
- D. Christ as the first God-man with His suffering life is a model for us; we need to live a life that is a copy, a reproduction, of the life of Christ that issues from enjoying Him as grace in our sufferings, so that He Himself as the indwelling Spirit, with all the riches of His life, reproduces Himself in us—1 Pet. 2:18-25.

IV. As those who are becoming the reproduction of Christ, we are heirs of the grace of life—3:7:

- A. Grace is Christ Himself as our enjoyment—John 1:14, 16-17.
- B. Grace is the resurrected Christ as the life-giving Spirit giving Himself freely to us, being everything to us, and doing everything in us, through us, and for us—vv. 14, 16-17; 2 Cor. 1:8-9, 12; Gal. 2:20; 1 Cor. 15:10.
- C. The grace of life is God as life and the life supply to us in His Divine Trinity—the Father as the source of life, the Son as the course of life, and the Spirit as the flow of life, who flows within us, with the Son and the Father, as grace to us—1 John 5:11-12; John 7:38-39; Rev. 22:1.

V. The central thought of Peter's Epistles and of the entire Scriptures is life and building—1 Pet. 1:23; 2:2-5; 2 Pet. 1:3-4:

- A. Life is the Triune God embodied in Christ and realized as the Spirit dispensing Himself into us for our enjoyment, and building is the church, the Body of Christ, God's spiritual house, as the enlargement and expansion of God for the corporate expression of God—Gen. 2:8-9, 22; Matt. 16:18; Col. 2:19; Eph. 4:16.
- B. Christ, as the seed of life, is the power of life within us that has granted to us all things which relate to life and godliness for the building up of the church as the rich surplus of life and the expression of life through the growth and development of life—2 Pet. 1:3-4; cf. Acts 3:15; *Hymns*, #203, stanza 4.

VI. God's goal is to have a spiritual house built up with living stones—1 Pet. 2:5:

- A. As life to us, Christ is the incorruptible seed; for God's building, He is the living stone—1:23; 2:4.
- B. At Peter's conversion the Lord gave him a new name, Peter—a stone (John 1:42); and when Peter received the revelation concerning Christ, the Lord revealed further that He was the rock—a stone (Matt. 16:16-18); by these two incidents Peter received the impression that both Christ and His believers are living stones for God's building (1 Pet. 2:4-8; Acts 4:10-12; Isa. 28:16; Zech. 4:7).
- C. We, the believers in Christ, are living stones as the duplication of Christ through regeneration and transformation; we were created of clay (Rom.

9:21), but at regeneration we received the seed of the divine life, which by its growing in us transforms us into living stones (1 Pet. 2:5).

VII. Since God's building is living, it is growing; the actual building up of the church as the house of God is by the believers' growth in life—Eph. 2:21:

- A. In order to grow in life for God's building, we must love the Lord, take heed to our spirit, and guard our heart with all vigilance to stay on the pathway of life—1 Pet. 1:8; 2:2, 5; 3:4, 15; Prov. 4:18-23; Deut. 10:12; Mark 12:30.
- B. In order to grow in life for God's building, we must be nourished with the guileless milk of God's word—1 Pet. 2:2:
 - 1. The guileless milk is conveyed in the word of God to nourish our inner man through the understanding of our rational mind and is assimilated by our mental faculties—Rom. 8:6; cf. Deut. 11:18.
 - 2. Although the nourishing milk of the word is for the soul through the mind, it eventually nourishes the spirit, making us not soulish but spiritual, suitable for being built up as a spiritual house of God—cf. 1 Cor. 2:15.
 - 3. By feeding on Christ as the nourishing milk in the word, we grow unto full salvation, unto maturity through transformation for glorification; salvation in 1 Peter 2:2 is a matter of transformation for God's building.
 - 4. We enjoy the “milk-Christ” to nourish us so that we may be transformed with Him as the “stone-Christ” and be built up as the “Body-Christ,” as God's spiritual house into a holy priesthood—vv. 2-5; 1 Cor. 12:12-13.

VIII. The holy priesthood, the coordinated body of priests, is the built-up spiritual house; God wants a spiritual house for His dwelling and a priestly body, a corporate priesthood, for His service—1 Pet. 2:5; Exo. 19:5-6:

- A. We are “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people acquired for a possession” (1 Pet. 2:9)—*chosen race* denotes our descent from God; *royal priesthood*, our service to God; *holy nation*, our being a community for God; and *people acquired for a possession*, our preciousness to God.
- B. Our corporate priestly service is to tell out as the gospel the virtues of the One who has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light (v. 9) so that we may “offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (v. 5b).