



Week Three — The Tree of Life or Life from the Cross

Note from the Fall 2026 Freedom Group, 29 September, 2026

Quick thoughts

Something we discussed prior to the start of this session. Genesis 2–3 is history. Two real trees stood in a real garden. When this chapter uses those trees as a way of talking about daily life, we will treat that as a picture — an allegory —.

If we keep the picture of two trees, Scripture itself already names the second one. The first tree is the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The second tree is the cross of Christ, which the New Testament calls a tree.

“He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.” — 1 Peter 2:24

“Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us — for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree.’” — Galatians 3:13

“The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree.” — Acts 5:30

Two trees

The first tree The knowledge of good and evil	The second tree The cross of Christ
A real tree in Eden (Genesis 2:16–17)	A real cross outside Jerusalem, also called a tree (Acts 5:30; 1 Peter 2:24)
The choice to take life on our own terms	Christ giving His life in our place
“You will be like God.” (Genesis 3:5)	“Not my will, but yours, be done.” (Luke 22:42)
Shame, hiding, blame, death (Genesis 3; Romans 5:12)	Forgiveness, access to the Father, life (Ephesians 2:18; John 14:6)
We reached for knowledge apart from God	God gave us Himself in the Son
The fruit was death	The fruit is righteousness, peace, and the Spirit (Romans 5:1; Galatians 5:22)

The Tree of Life (p. 25)

Galatians 5:13: You have been called to live in freedom. That freedom is the fruit of the cross. Christ set us free (Galatians 5:1). We do not use that freedom to feed the flesh. We walk by the Spirit (Galatians 5:13–16).

Wrong thoughts about God and about ourselves are healed by the Word, because the Word shows us the Son.



The Word trains us (p. 26)

Faith grows as we read Scripture and let it retrain the mind. Our Freedom Group is designed to help each other do that. Zephaniah 3:17: The Lord is among His people; He delights in them; He quiets them with His love.

His commands are not a burden (1 John 5:3). They rest on what He has already done. God works all things for the good of those who love Him (Romans 8:28), and He does this for the praise of His glory (Ephesians 1:6, 12, 14). Our good and His name meet at the cross.

Great Framework: Christ – The Word – The Spirit

The Fruit of Living in the Tree of Life

1. Fellowship with God (p. 27)

Knowing the Father and Jesus Christ whom He sent (John 17:3). We love because He first loved us (1 John 4:9–10, 19). Fellowship is with the Father and the Son (1 John 1:3).

The cross is the new covenant in His blood (Luke 22:20; Hebrews 9:15). God confirmed His promise with an oath so that we who have fled to Him for refuge would have strong encouragement (Hebrews 6:17–18). Nothing can separate those who are in Christ from the love of God (Romans 8:38–39).

2. Fellowship with God results in innocence – not the other way around (pp. 28–29)

You don't have to "work" to clean yourself up before you seek fellowship; your fellowship with God will clean you up!

Before the fall, Adam and Eve were naked and unashamed (Genesis 2:25). After they made the choice to eat of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, they hid (Genesis 3:7–8). But with Christ going to the cross, that second tree, we have access to something amazing – we can enter into the Most Holy Place, no more hiding. "Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water." (Hebrews 10:19–22).

That is why Jesus points to little children (Matthew 19:14). We come dependent. We grow up in our thinking and stay simple toward evil (1 Corinthians 14:20). We are to be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves (Matthew 10:16). The look of that life is the Sermon on the Mount: love your enemies, bless those who curse you (Matthew 5:39–44; Luke 6:27–36).

When we sin, we confess. He is faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us (1 John 1:9). There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:1). Conviction is a gift from the Holy Spirit. Condemnation was nailed to the tree.

We are a work in progress and follow a shared road to Glory through the following basic steps:



1. **Justification (the moment of salvation) Eph 2:8**
2. **Sanctification (growing to be like Christ) This is your life till you die 1 Cor 1:18**
3. **Glorification (when we enter Heaven) – Acts 15:11**

3. Innocence is a conduit of God's Power - Power that comes from abiding in Him (pp. 29–30)

Luke 4:18–19 is Jesus reading Isaiah about His own anointing. “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” “He is the Anointed One. We share in His life because we remain in Him.

“I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.” — John 15:5

The Spirit was poured out because Jesus was glorified (John 7:37–39; Acts 2:33). He equips us for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16–17). Fruit and gifts belong to those who walk by the Spirit, as He wills (Galatians 5:22–25; 1 Corinthians 12:11). We are witnesses and ambassadors (Acts 1:8; 2 Corinthians 5:20), because the One on the tree now lives.

4. Innocence results in Freedom - Freedom to get up again (pp. 31–32)

Christ has set us free. Stay free (Galatians 5:1). We will stumble. The Lord holds the godly by the hand (Psalm 37:23–24). Forgiveness is not a mood we work up. It is the blood of Jesus (1 John 1:7).

People who have been forgiven become quick to forgive, slow to take offense, and ready to serve rather than use others (Philippians 2:1–8). Bible, prayer, and service become delight because the yoke of Jesus is easy and His burden is light (Matthew 11:28–30). We are not hired hands. We are sons and daughters.

How to live from the Tree of Life or How to live from the cross (pp. 33–35)

Know who Jesus is. Know who you are in Him. Offer your body to God as a living sacrifice. Be transformed by the renewing of your mind (Romans 12:1–2).

Receive the love already shown: God demonstrates His own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8). Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 5:1).

Write these two verses on your heart:

“So you are no longer a slave, but God’s child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir.” — Galatians 4:7

“I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.” — 2 Corinthians 6:18

Deuteronomy 30:19 called Israel to choose life by loving the Lord. In Christ that life has a name. “Whoever has the Son has life” (1 John 5:12). The daily question is not “Which tree am I in?” It is “Am I remaining in Christ, the Vine? Am I listening and keeping in step with the Spirit?” (John 15:5; Galatians 5:25).



Renewing the mind (pp. 36–37)

Let Scripture judge our thoughts. Do not make the Bible line up with what we already think is true.

Do not conform to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind (Romans 12:2). Take every thought captive to make it obedient to Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5). Put off the old self. Put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness (Ephesians 4:22–24). Think about what is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, and admirable (Philippians 4:8).

That is life from the second tree, the Cross: a mind and a people shaped by the One, Jesus Christ, who hung on that cross and rose from the dead victorious!

A parting thought

The first tree is where Adam and Eve chose a life of separation from the intimacy of daily fellowship with God. The second tree is where God reached for us. We live from that sacrifice — knowing the Father, standing clean in the Son, walking by the Spirit, and letting the Word renew the mind.



Appendix — Scriptures in NIV

Old Testament

Genesis 2:16-17

And the Lord God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die."

Genesis 2:25

Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.

Genesis 3:5

"For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

Genesis 3:7-8

Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden.

Deuteronomy 30:19

This day I call the heavens and the earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live

Psalms 37:23-24

The Lord makes firm the steps of the one who delights in him; though he may stumble, he will not fall, for the Lord upholds him with his hand.

Zephaniah 3:17

The Lord your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing."

Gospels and Acts

Matthew 5:39-44

But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also. And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well. If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles. Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you. Love for Enemies: "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,

Matthew 10:16

"I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore, be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves.

Matthew 11:28-30

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. 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. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Matthew 19:14



Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."

Luke 4:18-19

"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

Luke 6:27-36

"But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. If someone slaps you on one cheek, turn to them the other also. If someone takes your coat, do not withhold your shirt from them. Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. Do to others as you would have them do to you. "If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do that. And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, expecting to be repaid in full. But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful."

Luke 22:20

In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you."

Luke 22:42

"Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done."

John 7:37-39

On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them." By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified."

John 14:6

Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

John 15:5

"I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing."

John 17:3

Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent."

Acts 1:8

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Acts 2:33

Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear."



Acts 5:30

The God of our ancestors raised Jesus from the dead—whom you killed by hanging him on a cross.

Paul's Letters

Romans 5:1

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

Romans 5:8

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Romans 5:12

Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned—

Romans 8:1

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,

Romans 8:28

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

Romans 8:38-39

For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 12:1-2

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

1 Corinthians 12:11

All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.

1 Corinthians 14:20

Brothers and sisters, stop thinking like children. In regard to evil be infants, but in your thinking be adults.

2 Corinthians 5:20

We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.

2 Corinthians 6:18

And, "I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty."

2 Corinthians 10:5

We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

Galatians 3:13



Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who is hung on a pole.”

Galatians 4:7

So you are no longer a slave, but God’s child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir.

Galatians 5:1

It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.

Galatians 5:13-16

You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other. So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

Galatians 5:22-25

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

Ephesians 1:6

to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.

Ephesians 1:12

in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory.

Ephesians 1:14

who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession—to the praise of his glory.

Ephesians 2:18

For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

Ephesians 4:22-24

You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

Philippians 2:1-8

Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!



Philippians 4:8

Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.

2 Timothy 3:16-17

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Hebrews, Peter, John, Revelation

Hebrews 6:17-18

Because God wanted to make the unchanging nature of his purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, he confirmed it with an oath. God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope set before us may be greatly encouraged.

Hebrews 9:15

For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.

Hebrews 10:19-22

Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.

1 Peter 2:24

“He himself bore our sins” in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; “by his wounds you have been healed.”

1 John 1:3

We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.

1 John 1:7

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

1 John 1:9

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

1 John 4:9-10

This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

1 John 4:19

We love because he first loved us.

1 John 5:3

In fact, this is love for God: to keep his commands. And his commands are not burdensome,



1 John 5:12

Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.

Revelation 22:1-2

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.

Revelation 22:14

"Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city.

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