



LIFE  
in the  
GREEN  
ZONE

***Are you in the zone?***



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## INTRODUCTION

Today's Christianity is centered more on the message of prosperity than on the fullness of life in Christ. The prevailing spiritual winds are leading us to believe that being spiritually blessed means having lots of material possessions. The Bible's message of holy living and developing Christ-like character is being replaced with a life style of indulgence and self-gratification—which the modern church is embracing.

Upon closer examination, however, the Bible has a much different view of what it means to be blessed. For example, being blessed is strongly tied to meditating on the Word of God. According to Psalm 1, it also means avoiding a mind-set that is akin to those who follow after the pleasures of the world.

Our chief adversary, Satan, is very subtle. As he tempted Christ in the wilderness by offering Him the kingdoms of this world, he tempts us today in a similar way by offering us the *pleasures* of this world. If he can get us to indulge in fleshly, temporal bliss, he has effectively stopped the work of God to conform us to the image of Christ, leaving us unproductive and ineffective in our walk with Him.

The Word of God admonishes us, however, to continue in what we have learned and received and heard and seen (Phil 4;9). Hence, avoiding the danger of being drawn away from the source of our strength—Christ, who will always lead us in triumphant procession.

## **The Place Of Blessing**

The “green zone” is a place of growth and prosperity, where life is lived at its fullest. It is the place of blessing.. Psalm 1:1-3 and Jeremiah 17:7, 8 best express what it means to abide in the place where the blessings of God are abundant.

“Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in Him. He will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit” (Jer 17:7, 8).

Similarly, Psalm 1:3 states “He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers”

## **Be The Tree**

Trees are beautiful. They come in all shapes and sizes—just like people. The passages above imply that if we want to be blessed, we should be like a tree. Trees don't worry, they aren't fearful. Standing in all of their majesty, they display their creative genius. Green leaves and fruit are a declaration of their divine design. God wants us to “be the tree” in the sense that we, too, are displaying fruit that comes from our relationship with Christ, thus fulfilling our divine purpose.

## **The Root Of The Matter**

The root is the conduit for nourishing a tree and all of its branches. Because water is essential for a tree to live, the root needs an ample supply for it to flourish, increasing the likelihood that the tree will not die prematurely.

Like a tree, we also need to be nourished. As water is a source of life for the tree, Christ is our source of life. Being rooted in Him will prevent spiritual malnutrition. Colossians 2:7 encourages us to “continue to live in Him, rooted and built up in Him.”

Trees and vines are used in the scriptures as metaphors to convey that a thriving and vibrant life is the essence of life in Christ. Jesus used the vine as an image to instruct his disciples to see that apart from Him they could do nothing. He said that being separated from Him is like a broken branch that withers because there is no union with the vine (Jn 15:5, 6).

While plants get life from the sun and soil, our life in Christ is maintained by the Word. In his John commentary, Matthew Henry says, "It is in the word that Christ is set before us, and offered to us. It is in the word that we receive and embrace Him; and so where the word of Christ dwells richly there Christ dwells" (*Matthew Henry, A Commentary On The Whole Bible*, Vol. 5, 1124). Paul said that we should let the Word have its home in our hearts and minds and it should dwell within us with all its richness (Col 3:16). When we source from the Word, we are supplied by Christ Himself.

### **Possessing The Good Life**

Jesus said that He came to give us abundant life (Jn 10:10). What did He mean by that statement? Did He mean that we would have everything we want? Was He saying that we would be financially blessed? Was He inferring that we would not be subject to disease and sickness, that we would be immune from trouble and sorrow?

It would be wonderful if the answers to the above questions were "yes." But Jesus was saying something much deeper and more meaningful. He came to rescue us from far more than the temporal problems we face in this world—He came to give meaning to life itself. He came to transform our lives by the Spirit of God; to give us an overcoming, victorious life that makes it possible for us to forsake all and to follow Him.

The abundant life can be likened to Canaan, the land given to the people of Israel by God. It was a prosperous land with everything the people needed. It was also a land filled with giants and enemies that needed to be conquered. God promised the people that He would defeat all their enemies if they would trust Him. All they had to do was take possession of the land. They were charged by God to enter in and possess it by faith.

Likewise, the abundant life is entered by faith. God, in turn, gives us everything we need to possess it. In love, He gives us His best and directs every step of our journey. He equips us from the storehouse of heaven so that we can defeat every foe that comes against us. Indeed, we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us (Rom 8:37). He also blesses us so that we can be a blessing to others. He entrusts us with delivering the good news of the gospel to all people. When they hear and believe, they also enter into fullness of life with Him.

## **A Divine Disposition**

According to 2 Peter 1:3-4, God has given us His great and precious promises—His Word, so that we can escape and avoid the infectious moral decay that is affecting the world, and become partakers of his divine nature. We have been given a divine disposition that sets our hearts toward Him, and by His Spirit, we are able to walk in freedom from the bondage of corruption.

Paul reminded Timothy in Philippians 4:9, to practice what he had learned, heard, received and seen. We, too, need to heed Paul's instruction ensuring that we remain strong in our walk with Christ thus preventing us from being dragged back into the world and its way of thinking.

## **Does Your Faith Add Up?**

2 Peter 1 also reminds us that by adding to our faith, we will not become unfruitful in our knowledge of God or become short-sighted or blind (vv 8, 9); skillfully advancing beyond the basic principles of our faith by pursuing the graces of virtue, knowledge, self-control, steadfastness, godliness, brotherly affection, and love. This is not done by self motivation, however. It is the Holy Spirit who strengthens us with divine ability to see that these graces take root and are manifested as righteous fruit in our lives, bringing glory to God.

## **The Pruning Process**

It is the Father's desire and will that we bear much fruit. Jesus said, "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it, that it may bear *more* fruit" (Jn 15:1, 2) NASB. This fruit is the gift of the Holy Spirit. When He enters our life, He deposits in us the seeds of God's love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Gal 5:22-23). This fruit is developed in us as we obey the Word, guided by the Holy Spirit.

## **Fruit That Remains**

Part of the beauty of a tree is the display of fruit from its branches. When the fruit is tasted, it brings pleasure to our physical senses. Likewise, the fruit of the Spirit, emanating from our life, profits those who come in contact with us. We are to others the sweet smelling aroma of

Christ. When they are in our presence, they are able to taste of Him and see that He is good. This Christlikeness on display in our lives also sets the stage for the power of the gospel to operate, thus producing a divine harvest of souls.

### **Green—But Not With Envy**

Life in the green zone means avoiding the works of the flesh, which are the opposite of the fruit of the Spirit. Galatians 5:17-21 warns us of deeds of the flesh that we are not to practice.

Among those are jealousy and envy; two of the most destructive attitudes that, if not avoided, can enslave the believer. Many people have been devastated by those who have allowed these attitudes to dominate their thinking and behavior. If left unchecked, these attitudes can also affect our relationship with Christ causing us to be “cut off” from Him - not that we lose our salvation but we lose our effectiveness for His kingdom.

Have you ever seen a tree that looked healthy on the outside, only to discover that upon closer observation, it was rotting from the inside? You find there are a few sparse leaves and perhaps a small amount of fruit indicating there is some life in the tree. At this point, there is little that can be done to save it unless there is quick intervention to get to the root of the problem.

Likewise, we must not allow attitudes of jealousy and envy to get “rooted” in us and prevent us from developing a fruitful life. Proverbs 14:30 says, “A heart at peace gives life to the body, but envy rots the bones.” The way to avoid this is to “walk by the Spirit” (Gal. 5:16). When we obey His leading, He gives us the power to conquer destructive thinking and sinful behavior.

### **Linked In**

God is committed to finishing the work that He began in us— conforming us to the image of His Son. Our part is to abide in Him. What does it mean to abide in Christ? It means to be linked in to Him; to express our love for Him in obedience to His Word. The Word testifies about Christ. It reassures us of His intimate love for us and confirms to us that He is working everything for our good and in harmony with His will.

Abiding also links us to spiritual blessings. For example, it enables us to have answers to prayer. Jesus said, “If you abide in Me, and My

words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done for you” (Jn 15:7). It ensures that we bear much fruit. Again Jesus states, “I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit” (Jn 15:5). Moreover, we experience absolute joy. “These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full” (Jn 15:11) NASB. This is life at its best. I believe this is what Jesus meant when He said that He came that we may “have life and have it to the full” ( Jn 10:10).

### **The Outlook Of The Blessed**

While Jeremiah 17:7 conveys that the man who puts his trust and confidence in God is blessed, Psalm 1:1 express God’s blessing from a negative viewpoint. For example, the Psalm begins with the words “Blessed is the man who does not... .” What follows are warnings not to walk, stand, or sit with those who do not follow God and have no interest in His Word. A closer examination of the passage is warranted.

**To walk** in the counsel of the wicked is to accept their advice or counsel, or to think the way they think. Romans 1:21-22, gives a glimpse of where that kind of thinking will lead us. “For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God, or give thanks; but they became futile in their speculations [reasoning, decision making], and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools.” Ephesians 4, also reiterates what was stated in Romans, “This I say therefore, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, being darkened in their understanding” (vv 17-18), (NASB).

**To stand** in the way of sinners is to adjust to their ways or behavior. Over time we become comfortable in their presence. We are not sensitive to the darkness that begins to overtake us.

For example, I remember being on the front porch of my house enjoying time with friends and family. It was about dusk and the light was just beginning to fade. We continued to talk for some time not paying attention to the darkness that was creeping in. Then, someone from inside the house switched on the porch light. We were suddenly made aware of just how dark it had become. Our eyes had gradually adjusted to the darkness over time, but the brightness of



the porch light brought about the stark contrast. In the spiritual realm, when we adjust to the world and its ways, gradually, subtly, darkness will overtake us. Only the Word can bring true light to the darkened condition of our heart.

To belong to or befriend those who mock God is what Psalm 1 refers to when it admonishes us not **to sit** in their midst. This means that we are not to adopt their attitudes. The attitudes of the world are based on self-centeredness. On the other hand, the attitudes of the believer are based on self-denial, being other-person centered. “With humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself” (Phil 2:3), NASB. This is the attitude of Christ.

It is the power of Christ that enables us to walk, stand, and sit with the right people in the right places. This is where we find green pastures, abundant life, and much fruit.

### **In The Zone**

You may ask, “How do I stay in the zone?” Let me suggest some things that may be helpful. Remember, God is for you and He is faithful to finish the good work He began in you.

When Paul wrote to the Philippians, he wanted them to know that God was committed to them. He states in Philippians 1:6 that he was “confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.”

In his letter to the Colossians, he exhorted believers to remain steadfast. I am listing thirteen exhortations from that letter for you to consider. They are:

- Increase in knowledge*
- Bear fruit in your walk*
- Give Christ the preeminence in your life*
- Be established in your faith*
- Be instructed through the Word*
- Be renewed in your mind*
- Be pure in your thinking*
- Be rich in the Word*
- Be submissive in your relationships*
- Be devoted to prayer*
- Be Christ-like in your work*
- Be careful in your conduct*
- Be selective in your speech*

I hope you will read through the book of Colossians in its entirety and look for these exhortations in their context. Perhaps you will find several more—that's the point.

Part of living in the “green zone” is discovering all the wonderful things God has given to you. His Word is inexhaustible. It is an overflowing fountain. As the Holy Spirit brings to life the written Word of God we get truth that is relevant to our life's journey as often as we open its pages.

### **The Power Of Oneness**

One final thought. In John, Jesus prayed for his disciples. I believe this prayer is also for all who believe in Him. He said, “I pray... that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me” (17:21), NASB.

When we give Christ the preeminence in our life, when we fill our minds with the Word, when we devote ourselves to prayer, when we submit to one another in love, and conduct ourselves in a way that pleases God, then the world will indeed believe that He sent forth His Son.

### **Life Beyond The Ordinary**

Perhaps the greatest, and yet most rewarding challenge to living the abundant life is following the Spirit of God beyond our comfort zone; overcoming fear and anxiety to experience God in ways that are new and extraordinary. In the process, we may discover that what once seemed impossible is now achievable through the power of Christ. By choosing to believe and obey, new vistas of opportunities to serve Him open before us.

You may never have gone this way before. You may never have walked by faith before. And you may never have sensed Him beckoning, “come, follow me.” Will you allow God to lead you in paths of righteousness for His name's sake—paths that will both challenge and reward your faithfulness to Him?

## **The Spirit of the King**

Quietly, softly, He speaks to these mortals  
Who bear the King's image- they hear His voice.  
Gently prodding, revealing truth,  
God's will His mission task.

Frail humanity is His home  
Far from the Majesty on high.  
These clay pots fashioned by Him,  
Made in His image, destined for eternity.

His plan is now unfolding.  
The earth strains, heaven will have its way.  
Demons tremble, they must bow  
To this Mighty One who controls the universe.

Through these vessels of clay, tho' imperfect,  
Vacillating between good and evil,  
He marches forth, confident that these mere mortals  
Will heed His call, do His will.  
Trembling, yet with boldness they advance as a mighty army  
Responding to His call — "follow me."

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