

Eternal Life.

Today's topic, What is eternal life, will start with a very familiar passage of Scripture, which is John 3:16. It seems like everybody knows that verse from a young age, yet I believe it has really been misunderstood and misapplied. John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life."

Traditionally, this scripture has been used to teach that Jesus came and died for our sins so that we would not perish. As true as this is, this verse is saying that the real purpose of Jesus coming to this earth and dying for us was so that we could have everlasting life. It just so happens that our sins were a barrier that stood between this everlasting life and us.

It is true that Jesus did die for our sins, and it is true that if we believe on Jesus, we will not perish, but there is much more to the Gospel than that. The real message of the Gospel is that God wants to give you everlasting life. Now let me explain that.

The night before His crucifixion, Jesus was praying, and He said:

Let us turn to,
John 17:3.

- Here begineth the reading of God's Holy Word.
This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ.
- Here endeth the reading of God's Holy Word.

This says that everlasting life is knowing the Father, the only true God, and knowing Jesus Christ, whom He has sent. That is what everlasting life is. Many people think that everlasting life is living forever. Well, every person lives forever. It is a misconception to think that when a person dies they cease to exist. The spirit and the soul go back to God. The body decays in the grave. The truth is, every person who has ever lived on the face of the earth will continue to live in spirit form. So, to say that eternal life is living forever is not the whole truth, everybody lives forever. This verse makes it very clear that eternal life with God is not automatically given to everyone.

Some people would say, "Eternal life is living forever in heaven versus living forever in hell." But eternal life is just what Jesus said in John 17:3, to know God and Jesus Christ. It is more than an intellectual knowledge or taking in knowledge. This word "know" is used throughout Scripture to describe the most intimate, personal relationship that you can have, as Adam knew Eve.

The real purpose of salvation is not living forever in heaven, as great as that will be. The real purpose of salvation is to have intimacy, or a personal relationship with the Lord God now as well as later.

Let us turn to:
1 John 5:12.

- Here begineth the reading of God's Holy Word.
He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.

John 5:25. Turn there with me.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live.

- Here endeth the reading of God's Holy Word.

There are multitudes of people who have cried out to God for the forgiveness of their sins but have never had intimacy with God as a goal.

By not explaining the real purpose of salvation, we are doing a disservice to the Gospel. When we present salvation as something that deals with just spiritual things that will only benefit us in the future, in eternity, we are not helping people. There are some people who are living in such a literal hell right now on earth.

Many of us, although we have a real relationship with the Lord, and when we die we will go to be with the lord, still many of us are bitter, miserable, sick, angry, there is un-forgiveness. Many of us are depressed, living in poverty, dealing with strife, rejection, hurt, and failed marriages. The divorce rate of Christians is higher than the divorce rate in the world. God forbid. People are just trying to survive day to day. They are just trying to keep their heads above water. By making salvation something that deals only with the future, many people put off that decision because they are too busy just trying to survive today. Many of us are converts and not disciples.

Many of us are not living the abundant life represented by this eternal life, this zoa life, this type of life that is capable of raising the dead. So that you might better understand the quality of eternal life:

Let us turn to:
Matthew 9:18

- Here begineth the reading of God's Holy Word.
While he spake these things unto them, behold, there came a certain ruler, and worshipped him, saying, My daughter is even now dead: but come and lay thy hand upon her, and she shall live.
- Here endeth the reading of God's Holy Word.

The Greek word used for live, in "and she shall live" is zoa. This zoa is the same word which is used for life in John 10:10; when Jesus said:

- Here begineth the reading of God's Holy Word.
The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly,
- Here endeth the reading of God's Holy Word.

Jesus came to bring you back into close, personal relationship with Him. Jesus loves you. Jesus wants to know you personally. Jesus wants to give you an abundant quality of life that is greater than anything you could obtain through any other source.

The truth is that Jesus not only came to affect our eternal destinies so that we can live forever in heaven in blessing instead of the punishment and curse of hell, but Jesus also came to deliver us from this present evil world (Galatians 1:4). Jesus came to give you intimacy and a personal relationship with God the Father today.

Eternal life, that abundant quality of life, does not start when you die, but it starts in this world today (John 5:24-29).

- Here begineth the reading of God's Holy Word.

John 5:24-29

24 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.

25 Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live.

- Here endeth the reading of God's Holy Word.

Notice in verse 24 the present possession of eternal life. They have already passed from death into life.

Verse 25 "A time is coming and has now come". A reference not only to the future resurrection but also to the fact that Christ gives life now. The spiritually dead who hear him now receive life from him now.

God wants to give you eternal life. God wants to give you abundant life, and I believe that you need that today, that you want that; Christ died not only to forgive your sins, but to bring you close to him in an intimate way. If you do not know the Lord, you need to know Him for that purpose. If you have already been born again, you need to go beyond just getting your sins forgiven and enter into everlasting life with the Father.

FACTS ABOUT ETERNAL LIFE

- A. The purpose of the Gospel is eternal life (John 3:16).
- B. Eternal life is knowing God (John 17:3).
- C. Knowing God is an intimate relationship (Galatians 1:4).
- D. Eternal life is available now (1 John 5:12).