

Eternal Life and Eternal Relationship

by H.J. Vine

The sermon emphasizes the profound privilege of eternal life and the intimate relationship believers have with God through Christ's sacrifice and the Holy Spirit's guidance.

Scripture: John 4:23, John 6:53, John 15:11, John 17:11, John 17:13, John 17:26, 1 Corinthians 14:17

Topics: "Eternal Life", "Holy Spirit"

Description

H.J. Vine preaches on the inestimable privilege of being in conscious enjoyment of eternal life and the eternal relationship with God, emphasizing that failures of men cannot hinder those who belong to the Son of God from experiencing this blessedness. The Holy Spirit reveals these blessings to us for our joy, especially after ecclesiastical failure. It is crucial for believers to pray in the consciousness of the nearness and favor they have through redemption, as this intimacy affects not only their own spiritual life but also others around them.

Transcript

It is an inestimable privilege to be before God in the conscious enjoyment of eternal life, and of the eternal relationship connected with that life. No failure on the part of men need hinder those who belong to the Son of God from having the abiding blessedness of this. That this is so is evident from the fact that the Holy Spirit of God has disclosed these incorruptible blessings to us, that our "joy may be full," in John's writings (John 15:11; 16:24; 17:13; 1 John 1:4; 2 John 12), and these were given of God after ecclesiastical failure had come in.

Our Lord Jesus Christ said, "He that eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life"; and in resurrection He made known the new relationship into which such are introduced, when He said, "Go to My brethren, and say to them, I ascend to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God" (John 20). To speak of this as exceedingly blessed, holy and divine, heavenly and eternal, is indeed true; but such expressions only partially indicate the infinite plenitude of this life, and the immeasurable richness of this relationship, established in the risen Son of God, and enjoyed in living energies which are not subject to death.

In worship or intercession the Spirit would enable us to be intelligently in the intimacy and joy of all this, which is the proper privilege of every one of us. We often take lower ground however, and step down from the honoured position in which grace has set us in Christ. This is to our own loss, and that of others also. How much more effectual our prayers would be, how much more elevating and edifying also, compared

with the petitions usually presented, if we addressed our God and Father in the consciousness of the nearness into which we are brought through redemption.

Truly edification is not the immediate purpose of public prayer; yet that is one of its most important effects (1 Cor. 14:17). What could be more edifying than John 17? The prayers of the New Testament, and of the Old likewise, would richly repay our careful consideration of them. To a wise man it would be a great privilege to hearken to one who stood in high favour and honour with a mighty monarch, presenting a petition to his majesty. To mark his becoming bearing; to heed his dignified address; to listen to his lofty argument and appeal, would be highly instructive. How much more so to follow one who intercedes with God in the consciousness of the nearness and favour of which we have spoken.

Generally speaking, Christendom has sunk to a very low level, and many sincere souls remain at a distance from God; and though it may be with reverent awe, yet they rarely rise above addressing Him as "ALMIGHTY." The true grace of God and acceptance in the Beloved are unknown to them. But, sad to say, many who do know these things allow coldness and distance upon their spirits. This keeps them from enjoying the holy intimacy which is their proper portion; and if prayer in nearness affects others, so also does prayer at a distance; so much so, that coldness and formality often settle upon a gathering until they become characteristic of it. This should not be; and it is not always the case, thank God!

Quite recently the writer was privileged to be at meetings for waiting upon God. Prayer flowed on for several days in sustained power, and mostly in the holy elevation of which we have spoken. Hour after hour passed, and still those present waited upon God. The Holy Spirit maintained them before Him in grace and confidence, in divine energy and holy boldness, from morning till evening, often without a break to partake of a meal. To say that the souls of those present in this case were greatly helped and edified is unnecessary. But what shall the answer be? Supernatural power maintained them in their prayers; supernatural power will work out the answer--the surpassing greatness of the power that is towards us who believe, which has already raised Christ from among the dead.

Those who lead in public prayer should seek to do so in the right spirit, and with the loftiness of sentiment which is consistent with the favour in which we stand before our blessed God and Father. The relationship which is ours now will not be more ours when we are in heaven. But in saying this, it should be added, whatever the believer's experience is, high or low, he ought always to pray and not to faint.

All outside this life and relationship are in moral death. They are alienated from the life of God. It is said, "Unless ye shall have eaten the flesh of the Son of Man and drunk His blood ye have no life in yourselves" (John 6:53, N.Tr.). Such are dead; they do not live in the life of Christ. But, thank God! those who appropriate His death have life. "He that eats My flesh and drinks My blood has life eternal." The plenitude of that life, the richness of it, and the relationship connected therewith are theirs to enter upon. Oh, to know this better! All outside is in death, as we have said. Let it be called by the name of "Christian," "church," "religion," or anything else. The only way of life is through Christ's death. We see this made known in the Scriptures of Truth. God grant us to possess in power that which is made known. May the shepherd-teachers, given by the ascended Head of the assembly, have grace and power to lead the beloved flock of God into the plenitude of this living pasture, where they may dwell in gladness of heart; where, beside flowing streams and in green pastures, protected by the Father and the Son, they may enjoy life abundantly.

His death has severed Him from this world. It is the way for His own into life, and into the intimacies of that life; as He said, "He that eats My flesh, and drinks My blood, dwells in Me and I in him." His words are spirit and life. We must not think of these things materially. The flesh profiteth nothing. Through faith and by the Spirit they are made good to us.

The only begotten Son makes known the Father to us. He has declared Him. His name and His love are revealed to our rejoicing hearts. We are His children, it is the love of relationship. Not as in Romans 5:8. There it is the love of GOD commended to us, in that "while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Great rest and peace are ours when that is known. But the Son makes the FATHER and the Father's love known to us. We are in relationship in this way. Ecclesiasticism has not and cannot preserve from the world. It has itself sunk into it. The Father's name known to the heart is the great preservative (see John 17:11-17). More than that, it produces true worshippers, who worship the Father in spirit and truth. His love fills their hearts to overflowing, it is the love that the Son Himself knows so well, as He said, "Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world. RIGHTEOUS FATHER, the world has not known Thee, but I have known Thee, and these have known that Thou hast sent Me. And I have made known to them Thy name, and will make it known; that THE LOVE WITH WHICH THOU HAST LOVED ME MAY BE IN THEM AND I IN THEM." The Father's love in us! The Son in us! Both known to us now, in life and relationship. What will it be to dwell in THE HOME of that love and life and relationship for ever!

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