

Gift of Eternal Life

by Rolfe Barnard

Eternal life is the gift of God, a present possession that is the life of God himself, dwelling in his people, and will never die.

Duration: 19:51

Scripture: John 1:13, John 17:1, John 17:3, Romans 6:23, 2 Corinthians 1:20, Ephesians 2:10, Philippians 2:13

Topics: "Eternal Life"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the threefold work of God in salvation, which is described in the teachings of the apostle Paul. He explains that salvation is a process that occurs in three different tenses: past, present, and future. The preacher emphasizes that the ultimate goal of salvation is for believers to be transformed into the likeness of Jesus Christ. He also highlights the concept of eternal life as a gift from God to sinful humanity, as described in the book of John.

Transcript

Good morning, friends. This morning I bring a message to you from the Word of God on that intriguing subject, Eternal Life, the Gift of God. Now with your Bibles open, let's consider this morning the gracious subject of Eternal Life.

What is it, who gives it, and to whom is it bestowed? And for want of any better scripture, we'll open the Word of God to the Book of John, the Gospel of John, at Chapter 17, and we'll read three or four verses, beginning at verse 1. These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come. Glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee, as thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. We must learn already that eternal life is the gift of God to sinful men.

And then in verse 3 we find the Holy Spirit's definition through the lips of our Lord Jesus Christ of what eternal life is. And this, the verse reads, and this is life eternal. Well, what is? Well, he says, that they might know.

Now who are the they? Why, the ones he gives eternal life to. And this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. Yeah, we're plainly told then that God has a purpose to give eternal life to some people, that that life is in and through his Son.

And then we are told that this eternal life is not simply a matter of just eternal existence or the time element, but that it is a relation to God Almighty, the only true God, and the Lord Jesus Christ. Eternal life, then, is a gift whereby God Almighty enables blind, dead, wicked sinners to know by experience God Almighty in Christ Jesus. Isn't that wonderful? That whets my appetite, and I hope you'll hear me now as I make a feeble effort to describe something of the wonders of this gracious gift from the hands of a sovereign God through his blessed Son, this gift that enables us to know the true God and the Lord Jesus Christ, to know him, to experience him, to joy in him, to feed upon him, to drink of him, to possess him, to be able to say, he's mine and I am his.

You know, my friends, it's a common knowledge that there is an animal life which everybody possesses. Then there's a mental life which lifts human beings up above the beast. But, dear friends, there is another life as much above the mental life as the mental life is above the animal life.

Now, my friends, the majority of men and women seem not to be aware of this, and if you seek to tell them about it, they won't believe you. But how can the carnal mind receive that which is spiritual? There is such a life, however, higher than the mental or animal life, and many of us know that of a surety. And this life that I'm talking about now, of course, is life eternal which God, in grace, imparts to the believing sinner right down here in time, here on this earth.

Now, this morning, what then is eternal life? Well, in the first place, as we've already suggested, it is the gift of God. In the Bible, we read the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Isn't that a blessed passage of Scripture? Now, it is a fact, and you know it, that no man can create life in himself.

The Scriptures are clear that man is dead in trespasses and sins. The Scriptures say, You who were dead in trespasses and sins hath he quickened. And again, the Scriptures say whereby, as by one, or wherefore, as by one man, sin entered the world, and death by sin.

So death passes on all men. Now, when the Bible speaks that way, it does not mean that men are dead physically, but it means that they are dead to all that is righteous and holy, and it means that in order for man to live spiritually, God must give that man life. The work of bringing forth physical life on this earth is, of course, the unaided work of God, and even so, when in Christ man becomes a new creation, that work is a divine operation of the Spirit of God.

By nature, that is, as we come into this world, by nature, man is dead and corrupt and utterly defiled. By nature, man is a rebel with a fallen will. By nature, man does not experimentally know God.

He knows about Him, but he doesn't know Him. He doesn't love God, nor does he seek God. Therefore, if eternal life ever becomes the possession of a sinful man, that eternal life must come to him as a free gift of a merciful and a sovereign God.

And that's a must, but thank God that's a possibility. For when we open the Scriptures, we find that they are very crystal clear on this matter. For instance, the Scripture will say, So then, it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showed mercy.

Then John will tell us in his gospel, To as many as received him, not it but him, to them gave he the power to become the children of God, who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but they were born of God. And then the Apostle Paul, under Holy Spirit leadership, says, We are his

workmanship, glory hallelujah, we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus. And then Paul will say, It is God that worketh in you, talking to God's people, both to will and to do his good pleasure.

Aren't those blessed Scriptures? Therefore it's so that if a man should toil and toil and toil for eternity, he'd be no nearer eternal life than when he first began. For eternal life is not the reward of, or the result of, or the fruit of man's effort, but eternal life is the gift of God. Not only is eternal life the gift of God, but in the second place, praise the Lord, it's a present possession, something people enjoy now here on this earth.

It's not something we got to wait till we die and go to heaven to enjoy. Bless the Lord, eternal life is to know God and his Son, and we know him experimentally, we know him actually, we know him in such a way we can't prove it to anybody else, but we dead sure have confidence about ourselves. And we now know God, we now know the Lord Jesus Christ, we now experience him, we now joy in him, we now feed upon him, we now drink of him.

The Word of God says in the Gospel of John, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me hath eternal life. He's already in that, he's already come to know God, he's already come to know the Lord Jesus Christ by experience, and that person shall not come into judgment, but that person is passed already from a state of death to God, unto a state of life to God. Did you notice the Lord did not say that eternal life is something that's reserved to be given at some future date, but that folks who hear his word in their hearts and receive him as their Lord and Redeemer have eternal life right now, glory hallelujah.

And John will tell us that we know that we have passed from death unto life, and he'll say he that hath the Son hath life. The moment God therefore saves a sinner, that moment eternal life is in the possession of that sinner, and that moment he begins experimentally to joy in and know God and his Son Jesus Christ. You know the Bible, especially in the teaching of the Apostle Paul, talks a great deal about the threefold work of God in salvation, and it talks about salvation in three different tenses, past, present, and future.

The Bible says according to Paul in 2 Corinthians 1 and 10, we have been delivered, praise God, we're being delivered, glory hallelujah, and we shall be delivered. There are three tenses, all of them talking about a past, a present, and a future deliverance. Now my friends, this is salvation in full completion.

When we have been delivered, some of us, we have been delivered, Christ by his perfect life and his death on the cross has redeemed us, and our sin debt has been paid by him. Christ, my friends, has emptied the vial of God Almighty's holy wrath for his people, but there's another tense mentioned here. It says we are being delivered.

In the beginning of salvation is not only the work of God, but also the sustaining work and the growth in grace and knowledge of Christ. That is the work of God. We are told in the scripture that we are kept by the power of God through faith, not apart from faith, but through faith.

We are told that Christ Jesus, our Lord, daily intercedes for his people, and we could not live five seconds apart from his keeping power. But now there's still another tense to this salvation business, and that's future. The work of salvation is done, but the design of salvation is not complete until we stand in his perfect likeness in glory.

You know, isn't it wonderful to read the Bible and find out that Almighty God set out in eternity to make a people just like his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and his purpose for his people will be complete when and only when all of them have been made exactly like the Lord Jesus Christ. And my friends, this is the hope

of everyone who is saved. We want to be just like our Lord.

These bodies will be buried in shame, but thank God they'll be raised in glory. They'll be buried in sin. Thank God they'll be raised in perfection.

They'll be buried in weakness. Thank God they'll be raised in power. And we shall know no more death or pain when we stand plumb saved in the likeness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Salvation is past. We've been saved. Salvation's present.

We are being saved. Salvation's future. We yet shall be saved.

And all of that as in the beginning and in the continuance and in the fruition, we come more and more, more and more into the likeness of the Lord Jesus Christ and joy in him, praise God, forevermore. Not only therefore is the Bible clear when it says that salvation, eternal life, coming to know God and his Son is the gift of God, not the work and reward of the effort of men. Not only does the Bible say that's something that takes place now, right down here in time.

Somebody said if God's got anything in heaven any better than he has down here, he'll have to get up mighty early in the morning to bring it out. And we need to remember that hell is just this life continued and that heaven is just this life continued. Men who exist now without God will do so yonder in eternity.

Men who live lives of sin now will live lives of sin in eternity. And men who have life, who know the Lord, who experimentally joy in him, who thus are able to commune with him and see him and feed upon him and feast upon him and drink of him and delight in him and taste of him that he is good and walk with him and talk with him and have him talk to you. Oh, praise God.

Heaven will just be that without any of the hindrances of this old body of the flesh. Praise the Lord. Glory.

Hallelujah. We have eternal life now. But the scriptures say in the third place that this eternal life is the life of God himself.

In salvation the word of God's clear. The Holy Spirit, God, the Holy Spirit comes in quickening power and breathes God's life into dead sinners. That's a staggering statement, but it's so.

The Holy Spirit breathes divine life, breathes God's life, therefore it's eternal, into dead sinners. You know, there is no life apart from God. There's existence but no life.

And there is no life that is eternal apart from the eternal one. If I could have what to call eternal life, that means I'd just live forever and wouldn't have him who is life. I wouldn't care for the former.

There is no life apart from God and there is no eternal life apart from being vitally united to the eternal one. Therefore the gift of God, as I've been saying to you through this broadcast, is not only the gift that God gives, but God, help us get this, will you? God is the gift that is given. I just hang my head now and want to weep.

Isn't that wonderful? Let me repeat it. The gift of God is not only the gift that God gives, but God is the gift that is given. Oh, Christ gave himself for us.

God in Christ was reconciling the world. The gift is God himself. Not his goodness, not his pity, not his sympathy, but himself.

Eternal life is not only the gift of God, but the gift is God himself. Eternal life is Christ living in us. Paul said, I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live.

Yet not I, but Christ liveth in me. The gift of God is eternal life and that life is in his son. He himself is eternal life.

And when we have eternal life, that means we have God living in us. Isn't that marvelous? We will come to him, says Christ, and take up our abode in him. Isn't that precious? The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, each in a certain way, comes and dwells within the man, and so he is alive unto God.

Our Lord Jesus Christ said when he was down here, If any man thirst, let him come to me. And what a result! Well, out of his belly shall flow wells of living water, and thus, my Lord, spake of the spirit which those that believe on him should receive. In other words, he is saying that the bodies of his people are the temples of the Holy Spirit.

Staggering thought it is, praise God, shout it out, come hell or high water, let the devil shriek if he will, but eternal life is God himself dwelling in his people. And then in the last place, in about a half a minute, the scriptures teach that eternal life is life which never, never dies. My Lord, when he was down here, said in words that have never died, My sheep hear my voice, and they follow me, and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.

Eternal life is just exactly what our Lord said it is, life that never ends. All who believe on the Son of God with saving faith are given to the Son by the Father in the eternal covenant, back in the sacred halls of eternity. None of them, thank God, none of them shall be taken from him, my Lord said.

And this is the will, the Father's will, which has sent me, that of all which he had given me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. Isn't it precious? I've spoken to God's people this morning, that you might rejoice again, not only in your salvation, but in your Lord and Savior. Joy in him, the Lord Paul said.

Rejoice in him. Drink of him, says John. Feed upon him, says John.

Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord. The gift of God is eternal life. And Ralph Barnard, turning you back in a moment to the announcer, says, May the Lord richly bless you who've heard this message.

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