

JOHN THREE: SIXTEEN

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CHAPTER TEN -

But Have Everlasting Life

WHAT A TEXT! It begins with GOD and ends with eternal life - and you ("**whosoever**") are between the two!

This great text tells us two things about GOD and two things about man: GOD loved the world and gave His Son; the man who believes shall not perish but have life.

The portion of the text we write of speaks of the blessings of the saved. "**Should NOT perish**" gives the negative aspect; "**BUT have**" gives the positive. This little word **BUT** distinguishes between the saved and the lost; between the justified and the guilty; between those who have life in CHRIST and those who are dead in sin. The believer will not perish but be saved; will not abide in death but will have life; will not be punished but will be blessed forever. What a difference that little word **BUT** makes.

"**Everlasting**" and "**eternal**" are two words used in Scripture to describe the life referred to in this verse. These two words are synonymous, however, for they are different translations of one Greek word. We shall use them interchangeably in this article.

"But Have Everlasting Life" Requires Some Distinctions

Everlasting life does not mean eternal existence.

- If everlasting life were only eternal existence, then Satan himself would have everlasting life because he has external existence. We read that he will be tormented day and night forever and ever.
- Demons have eternal existence, for we read of an everlasting fire prepared for the Devil and his angels.
- The lost have eternal existence, for we read that they are to be cast into everlasting fire.

While the Scriptures recognize that Satan, demons, and the lost have eternal existence, the Scriptures never say that everlasting life is to be possessed by Devil, or demons, or the lost. "**God hath given to us eternal life**" (I John 5:11) does not refer to the world. The pronoun "**us**" means believers. Everlasting life is the present possession of every believer, but the possession of no unbeliever. Life that lasts forever, and everlasting life are not one and the same.

Everlasting life does not mean natural life. It is not a life derived from our parents, no matter how godly those parents may have been. It is not our natural life refined or perfected. The difference between life and everlasting life is not merely a matter of education. No individual can be schooled or cultured into everlasting life. It never comes to a man wrapped up in a diploma.

Everlasting life does not come to you through church membership, or through moral conduct, or through high ideals. No system of religion can produce it; no ecclesiastical fiat can confer it. You may give all your goods to feed the poor, and give your body to be burned, and still not have it. None of these, nor all of them together, constitute everlasting life.

Everlasting life does not mean immortality. The word "**immortality**" in Scripture refers to the body.

The living body is called a mortal body; the dead body is called a corruptible body. The living body is never called a corruptible body, nor is a dead body ever called a mortal body. In the day when CHRIST returns, the corruptible body of the dead man will put on incorruptibility, and the mortal body of the living man will put on immortality. These terms have to do with the resurrected and renovated bodies of the saints - bodies that are fashioned like unto His body of glory (I Corinthians 15:51-58). Neither mortality nor immortality have to do with the spirit of man which is just as imperishable as GOD Himself.

Everlasting life does not mean Heaven. Some people seem to think that when we die we go to everlasting life. That is not true. We have everlasting life now, and if we die we go to Heaven. Everlasting life is not a locality. When our Lord said, "**I go to prepare a place for you,**" He did not mean that He was going to prepare eternal life. He was going to prepare a place in Heaven.

Everlasting life does not mean a divine spark in man - which is to be fanned into a blaze by some "puff of social service." The only trouble with the divine spark theory is that the spark went out six or seven thousand years ago and nothing but ashes remains.

Everlasting life does not mean the old life changed. It is something absolutely new. Everlasting life is defined in John 17:3, which reads, "**This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, Whom thou has sent.**" This sets forth the purpose of everlasting life - that we might know Him. Everlasting life is not eternal existence merely, but eternal companionship with the Persons of the Godhead: FATHER, SON and SPIRIT.

"But Have Everlasting Life" Needs an Explanation

The greatest question man has ever asked, and never answered is "What is life?" No one has ever been able to define life.

What is life? Who knows? Science has put forth every effort and applied every possible test to discover what life is, but all in vain.

What is life? Of what does it consist? One has said, "The laboratory gives no answer. The scientist does not tell. The doctor does not know. The grave is silent." A scalpel has never been

made that can cut deep enough into man to find life.

What is life? Who can say? We know so little about it. We merely know the fact of life. We see some of its manifestations; we describe some of its effects. It is in the beat of the pulse; it is in the throb of the heart; it is in the thrill of the voice; it is in the flash of the eye; it is in the smile on the lips; it is in the flush on the cheeks; it is in the movement of the body. But, after all, what is life?

Since human life is beyond definition, what shall we say about eternal life? Where will we ever get words to describe that?

What is eternal life? Can man answer? No! NO!

Can we get an answer? Yes. GOD answers the question in His Word. I John 5:20, **"His Son Jesus Christ.**

"This is the true God, and ETERNAL LIFE." John 14:6, **"I am the... LIFE."** John 11:25, **"I am the resurrection and the LIFE."** Colossians 3:4, **"When Christ, Who is our LIFE."** To have life we must have CHRIST. II Corinthians 4:10, **"That the LIFE also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body."** Galatians 2:20, **"Christ LIVETH in me."** Colossians 1:27, **"Christ IN YOU, the hope of glory."** I John 5:11-12, **"God hath given to us ETERNAL LIFE, and this LIFE is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath LIFE, and he that hath not the SON of GOD hath not LIFE."**

Everlasting life is not in the first Adam, but in the Last Adam; everlasting life is in the Last Adam, not inherent in us. We must believe in the last Adam to secure it. Man as born in Adam does not possess everlasting life.

"This life is in his Son." It is only in His Son. It cannot be had apart from His Son. It is not only from Him; it is in Him. It is inseparable from Him. Since life is in CHRIST and we have CHRIST, then we have what is in Him - eternal life. We may exist in the ordinary sense apart from CHRIST, but it is only through participation in His Son that eternal life becomes ours. Man is dead in trespasses and sin, separated from GOD, and so entirely devoid of eternal life. Unless man becomes a recipient of life as a gift from GOD, he will eternally remain as he is. Our life apart from GOD is but a living death. There is an old saying, "In the midst of life we are in death," but the believer can happily reverse it and say, "In the midst of death we are in life."

"He that hath the Son hath life." That is, "hath THE life." This is a very clear declaration that to have CHRIST is to have life. This is not a life separated from Him. Note the expression in Colossians 3:4, **"when Christ who is our Life."** This does not merely mean that CHRIST gave us life, although that is true. It means more. He is our Life. He gave us life by giving us Himself. He entered into our life, so that our life is not one detached from Him.

- A spark may fly from a burning house and start another separate fire. CHRIST did not throw off a spark of life.
- A plant drops a seed and a separate plant grows, but that is not the kind of life we have.

The life we have is unsevered and unseparated from CHRIST.

We believe that just as truly as the SPIRIT of GOD formed CHRIST physically in Mary, so CHRIST is formed spiritually in every believer. Our definition of a Christian follows: A Christian is a re-incarnation of JESUS CHRIST. Colossians 1:27, "**Christ in you.**"

In Galatians 2:20 Paul writes, "**Christ liveth in me.**" This is a blessed union. The Lord Himself compared the union between Himself and the believer by the vine and its branches. The vine lives in the branch by means of the nourishment and vital energy which flow from the vine into every branch. If the branch were like the little horn of Daniel and had a mouth speaking great things, it could say, "I live, yet not I, but the vine liveth in me." If the vine fails to extend its life into the branch, the branch dies. No vine in the branch, no life in the branch. The life center of a man's physical body is the heart. The heart lives in every part of the natural body. When the heart beats, it pulses in every member of the body. You can feel it - you can even see it in the wrist. Place your finger on your brow and when your heart beats you can feel the pulse there. You can feel it in the ankle. It is everywhere. If your hand had any intelligence and could speak, it could say, "I live, yet not I. The heart liveth in me." Stop the heart and the hand is dead. The foot can say the same, and the head - "I live, yet not I. The heart liveth in me."

So the believer must say, "**I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.**" Dr. A. B. Simpson once spoke of Christian life as "just letting Jesus live His life through you." This is true. The highest expression of Christian living is not an imitation of CHRIST, but rather a repetition of CHRIST. It is from Him that there come all the pulsations of holy thought, holy affection, holy feeling, holy choice, holy purpose, which make the believer's experiences. Holiness is not in the flesh. It is not natural. If CHRIST is in us, the same thought, and feeling, and principle, and purpose, and choice, and faith, and love, and joy which are in His heart will be repeated in us. Do you pray? That is the heartbeat of the SON. Do you seek the lost? That is the heartbeat of the SON. Are you filled with peace? That is the heartbeat of the SON.

"For me, Lord JESUS, Thou hast died,
And I have died in Thee.
Thou art risen: my bands are all untied,
And now Thou livest in me."

I John 5:12 also makes the negative statement, "**He that hath not the SON of GOD hath not life.**" Dr. W. H. Griffith-Thomas explains the clause "**he that hath not**" by saying. "'He who does not want it' would better express the thought here. It reminds us of the Lord's '**Ye will not come to Me, that ye might have life.**'" So not to have the SON is not to have life, and not to have life is to perish. On the other hand, to have the SON is to have life and to have life is not to perish.

Life is a gift. There is no life by spontaneous generation. Life comes only from life. Out of nothing, nothing comes. All life comes from a life above it. Since this is true, who gives life? Man cannot; therefore GOD must. GOD gave life to the archangel; GOD gave life to the beasts of the field, the fowl of the air, the fishes in the sea; GOD gave life to Adam, and so to us. There is no other source of life.

This is true not only of physical life; it is true also of eternal life. GOD hath given to us eternal life. Only GOD can give such life. Church cannot give it; college cannot give it; congress cannot give it; club cannot give it; creature cannot give it. **"The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."**

John 1:4 says, **"In him was life."** What life? All life-physical, intellectual, judicial, spiritual, eternal. **"In him was life"** - not death as in His creatures. **"In him was life"** - not a derived life, but life inherent; life self-existent; life independent of all others. He is the Author and Sustainer of all life. He is the Fountainhead of life. **"In him was life"** - and whatever life you have is a gift from Him.

This gift is bestowed upon whosoever believeth. The simplicity of this is seen in the line,

"Who on the SON believeth,
Everlasting life receiveth."

"But Have Everlasting Life" Declares Present Possession

"God hath given to us eternal life." It is not promised, but given. The word **"hath"** is very emphatic. Either we have CHRIST or we do not have Him. Either we have life or we do not have life. **"Hath"** does not mean hope, nor maybe, nor perhaps. It is very definite and very positive. It does not admit of either misunderstanding or misinterpretation. If you believe in the Lord JESUS CHRIST, GOD's gift to you is eternal life, and this life is in His Son.

Dr. Griffith-Thomas says, "The word **'hath'** in the New Testament means both to obtain and retain, including not only possession but conscious possession. We might almost say that **'hath'** means 'to have and to hold.'"

We have already said that too many, when they think of eternal life, think of something we shall have afterwhile; that is, when we get to Heaven. But we have it NOW. In our minds eternal life has to do with eternity - that is, in the sense of the future. The fact of the matter is, if we have eternal life we are already in eternity. Never forget that eternal life does not mean mere existence. Really, eternal life is not a matter of the almanac at all. It does not have to do with time but depends wholly upon our relationship to the Lord. We think of eternal life as life without end, but JESUS CHRIST is Eternal Life, and when you have Him you not only have life that shall have no end, but you have life that never had a beginning. You see, eternal life is not concerned with duration so much as quality. Duration is naturally involved, but duration is also involved in the case of the sinner who has no eternal life.

So the believer on the Lord JESUS CHRIST who has eternal life is in eternity already. We are as truly in eternity now as we will be when we get to Heaven. Heaven is merely a change of environment and scenery. Scripture does not so much draw contrasts between here and there, now and then, as between things seen and unseen. **"We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the**

things which are not seen are eternal" (II Corinthians 4:18).

Lot is an illustration of a man who looked at things seen. **"And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan"** (Genesis 13:10). Abraham is an illustration of a man who looked at things unseen. **"He looked for a city which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God"** (Hebrews 11:10). Eternal things existed in Abraham's day. Eternal things exist now. To our mortal vision they are unseen, but we have a life which links us up to those unseen things. Heaven is a place to which we are going in the future, but eternity is with us now.

In the light of all this, our lives ought to harmonize with eternity.

- Do we live for things temporal or things eternal?
- Do we live for the things that perish or for the things that endure?
- Do we live for things seen or for things unseen?

Since eternal life is a present possession, it has to do with our present experiences. Life manifests itself in actions, and CHRIST Who is our Life will make His presence known. If that life does not show, evidently there is no life in us. Paul declares, **"The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of GOD, Who loved me, and gave Himself for me."**

Paul is talking here about his ordinary, everyday life, not merely some lofty, mountain-top experience that he had once in a while. It includes his working at the trade of tent-making - with Priscilla and Aquila. It includes his visit to the shops to buy cloth made of camel's hair. It includes his visit to the markets. It includes his preaching. It includes his private life, and social intercourse, and his traveling from place to place. It includes his eating, his drinking, his rest. In other words, it includes every part of his everyday life. That which we do, and think, and say ought to be the out-working of eternal life within. Eternal life is not a mere torpid and apathetic thing.

Hebrews 7:16 speaks of **"the power of an endless life."** Dr. Scofield suggests that too many times our present life lacks power because we think of its coming to an end at death or at the coming of the Lord. We seem to think that then we will begin all over again with some new kind of life. We excuse ourselves because of our subjugation to the world, the flesh, and the Devil, and we think of the time when we shall be holy. We think of future usefulness and future glory, but we have a life to live NOW. We ought not postpone any excellency of life until the day when we meet Him. We ought not to be satisfied with earthly and fleshly things because we are still on the earth. Eternal life ought to mean eternal living. The **"law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus"** frees us from the law of sin and death.

Furthermore, our experiences, our afflictions, our trials ought always to be viewed in the light of eternity. II Corinthians 4:17, 18 make plain the fact that when affliction comes it has relation to things unseen because the FATHER in Heaven, through that affliction is shaping us for greater glory in the days to come. The same thing is true of our joys and blessings.

The conclusion of this matter is that we ought so to live that if we knew the Lord was coming in just a few hours, that knowledge would make no change in our living.

As you meditate upon this truth, be sure that the part of your eternal life which you live here will affect your entire future.

There is a legend that upon one occasion in the latter days of Greece, when all practical faith in the gods had died out of the minds of educated people, a prize was offered to the sculptors of Greece for the best statue of a certain god. By a marble quarry, lived a country lad who still believed in that god, and for love of him desired to make the statue. He chose a block of marble and hewed away manfully. He had before his mind a beautiful ideal of the grace and majesty and power of that god, but when he had wrought his best, he made a very crude statue indeed.

The legend says that this god, who had seen his endeavor, when the trial came and the experts were laughing at this crude thing, shaped with clumsy hand, but believing heart, - the god himself entered into that pathetic marble failure, and then all the harsh lines flowed into perfect symmetry, the head was lifted proudly and the marble glowed with all the nameless grace of life.

This legend faintly shadows forth the actual fact for you and me today, that GOD the SON is within us. He entered when we believed. He is now asking from us yieldedness to Himself.

"But Have Everlasting Life" Includes All Eternity

We enjoy the blessing and fruit of eternal life here and now, but we look on to the future when the hindrances of the present life shall be done away and we shall know in all its fulness the life of GOD, in that day when we shall be conformed to the image of His Son. Rotherham has well paraphrased I Corinthians 15:19, "If in this life in Christ we have hoped and that is all, we are of all men most to be pitied." But our hope is not a mere bubble with no reality, for in that day when our Lord comes, we shall enter into the blessed experience of being not only like Him but with Him forever.

What is eternity? Who can answer the question? Illustrations are so futile.

Count the gold and silver blossoms
Spring has scattered o'er the lea;
Count the softly-sounding-ripples
Sparkling on the summer sea;
Count the lightly flickering shadows
In the autumn forest glade;
Count pale nature's scattered teardrops
Icy gems by winter made;
Count the tiny blades that glisten
Early in the morning dew;

Count the desert sand that stretches
Under noontide's dome of blue;
Count the notes that wood-birds warble
In the evening's fading light;

Count the stars that gleam and twinkle
O'er the firmament by night.
"When thy counting - all is done
Scarce Eternity's begun.
Reader! Pause! where wilt thou be
During thine ETERNITY?"

What is eternity? Who can answer the question? To us it means just yesterday, today, and tomorrow: yesterday because our eternal life is rooted in the eternal past; today because it means the activity of the life which I now live in the flesh; tomorrow - what does - it mean for the morrow? Heaven? Yes, but Heaven is not eternal life.

"Wonderful SAVIOUR! Wonderful Friend!
Wonderful life that never shall end!
Wonderful place He's gone to prepare!
Wonder of wonders, I shall be there."

What is eternity? Who can answer the question? Not even the Spirit of GOD, for He is limited by the limitations of human speech in trying to tell us the majesty, the marvel, the magnificence, the miracle of the things that GOD hath prepared for them that love Him.

We humbly rejoice that the day will come when **"God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away"** (Revelation 21:4). **"God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."** No more tears! He who dries them is GOD Himself. This is not temporary relief; it is eternal. GOD not only shall wipe away all tears, but in that day remove everything that causes tears - poverty, disappointment, suffering, bereavement, sin. **"All tears!"** And they be many.

"And there shall be no more death." **"Death is swallowed up in victory."** Everything associated with death will be gone - undertakers, hearses, funeral services, graveyards, tomb stones.

"Neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain." Sorrow shall cease. Crying shall be hushed. Pain shall be no more. The things which make up the volume of human misery shall all be passed away.

What is eternity? Who can answer the question? Maybe one word will make it as clear as volumes of speech. We give that word in an illustration that concerns an old saint of GOD who was stricken with paralysis. His service for CHRIST was finished and his life on earth drawing very near to its close. The last hour had come, and his family, Christians all, were gathered in his chamber. The paralysis had robbed the dying man of the power of speech, but not of his joy in the Lord; his family could see that, and had no misgivings for him. Yet they longed for some final word, some cheer and comfort that would abide with them when he was gone, and it was quite right and natural that they should.

In the hope that at the very last his speech might be restored, they asked if he had anything to say. He could say nothing with his mouth; articulate he could not, yet they were not to be disappointed, for his last word was to be given to them in a more deliberate and thrilling way than by mere speech.

He had learned to spell out the deaf and dumb alphabet upon his fingers in order to preach the Gospel to some deaf mutes who lived near his home, and now this knowledge came into blessed use, for upon his fingers he spelled out one word, slowly and with emphasis, and his family, as they eagerly watched the dying fingers, read all they desired, for the word spelled upon them was

G-L-O-R-Y!

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