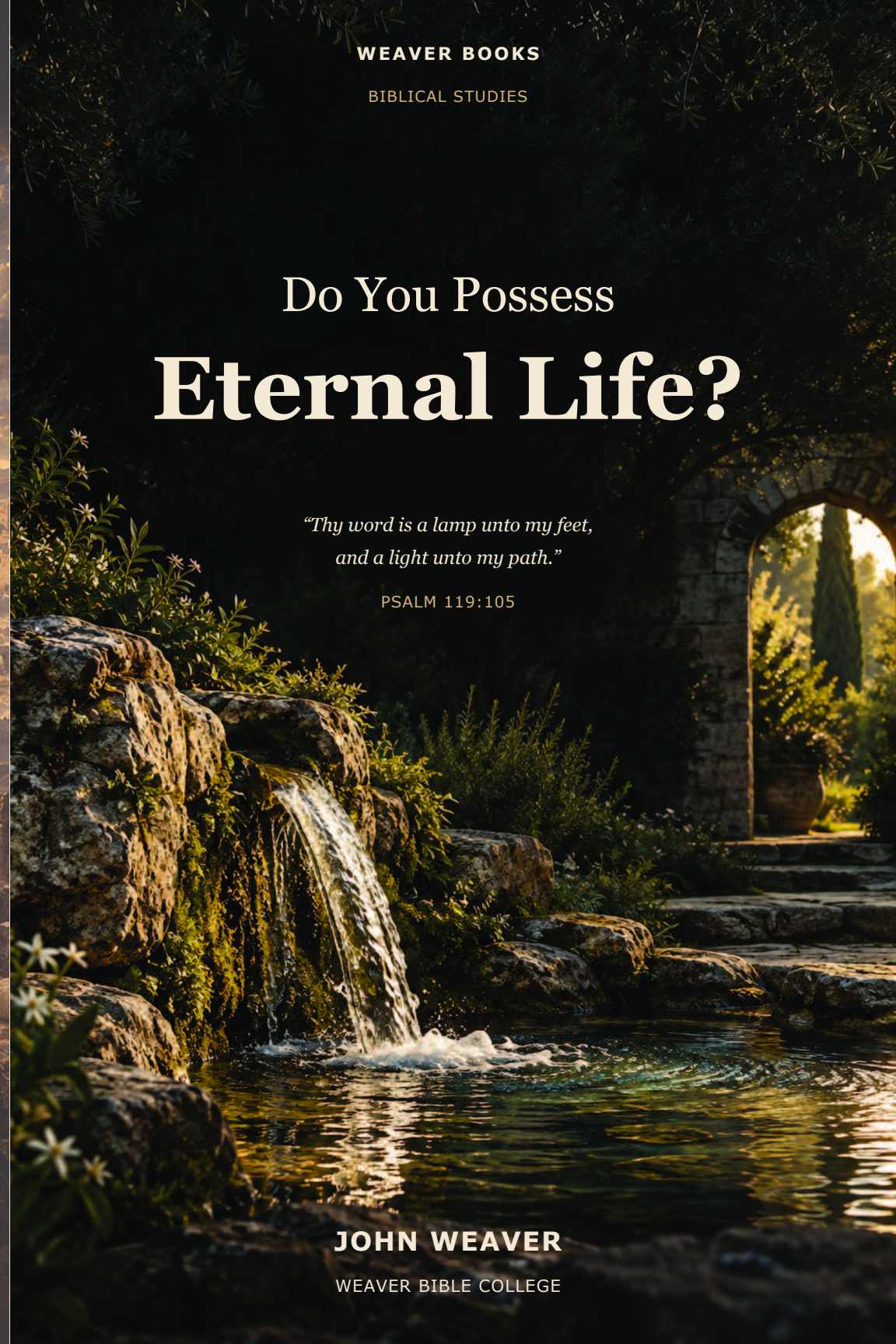
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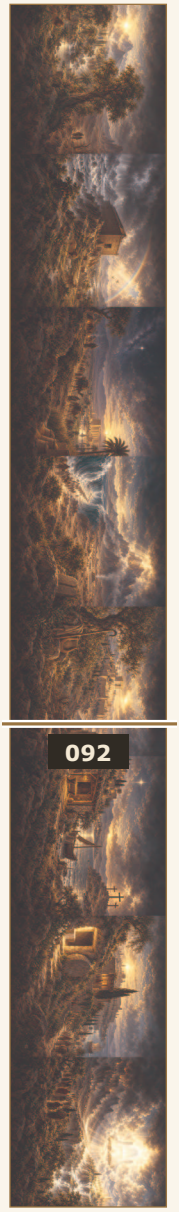
"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."

PSALM 119:105



JOHN WEAVER

WEAVER BIBLE COLLEGE



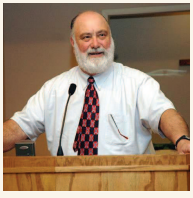
And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.

JOHN 17:3

Eternal life is more than the expectation of endless existence. John Weaver examines its present reality, its source in Christ, and the relation of repentance and faith to God's sovereign gift. These messages invite careful self-examination while directing assurance away from human achievement and toward the life received through Christ.

"Eternal life is nothing more than intimate communion between the believer and the Father through the merits and mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ."

JOHN WEAVER



John Weaver

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CHAPTER 1

Do You Possess Eternal Life? - 1

Do You Possess Eternal Life?

Introduction: The Most Important Question

The message I'm going to begin today is entitled, “Do You Possess Eternal Life?” This is going to be part one. Next Sunday, Lord willing, will be part two, and the main message will be next Sunday, Lord willing, because I had to give a lot of information to lead up to that.

So, do you possess eternal life? Look in Matthew 19 and verse 16. The Bible says, “And behold, one came and said unto him, Good master, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?” Now, if you look at Mark chapter 10 and verse 17, once again you see this rich young ruler. Here is the same question: “And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running and kneeled him and asked him, Good master, What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?”

Then, if you look at Luke chapter 10 and verse 25, in this passage once again the Bible says, “And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” And then in Luke 18 and verse 18, once again you have the rich young ruler. Here is what is asked: “And a certain ruler asked him, saying, good master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?”

So the question is, do you possess eternal life? You could explain what a question is, but the truth of the matter is this: in fact, it is the most important question you will ever be asked. When I ask you, “Do you possess eternal life?” what is your answer? Now, listen carefully. If your answer is one of the following—“I think so,” “I hope so,” “maybe so,” “we will see,” or “I'm working on it”—in all probability, you do not possess eternal life.

Misconceptions about Eternal Life

Someone has humorously and aptly said, “If you can be saved and not know it, then you can lose it and not miss it.” Someone also has humorously and aptly said, “Everybody that's talking about heaven ain't going there.” Well, that's true. But stop and think about this question: Do you possess eternal life?

Many think that eternal life is simply living forever. If eternal life can be defined that simply, then you could also say that the unsaved have eternal life, because they are going to live forever in torments. If all eternal life is living forever, then they would have it as well. So eternal life is not simply living forever.

Another fallacy that most people have about eternal life is that they are going to get it only when they die. Let me make a statement, and I am going to prove it to you before this day and, Lord willing, next Sunday are over as well, if the Lord allows us all to live: If one does not possess eternal life before he dies, he will never have it after he dies.

Most people wish to live an unholy, ungodly life. Then they die, and presto, somehow, in a moment of time, they are transformed into holy beings. It simply does not work like that. Most people are like Balaam. Balaam was a wicked, covetous, ungodly man, but he said, “Let me die the death of the righteous.” He did not want to live

the life of the righteous, but he wanted to die the death of the righteous. The truth is, you cannot die righteously unless you live righteously.

When I talk about eternal life, someone inevitably asks, "Well, what about the thief on the cross?" Let me tell you something about the thief on the cross. First of all, he is the exception and not the rule. Do you know how many deathbed conversions are recorded in Scripture? The answer is one: the thief on the cross.

As one old Puritan aptly pointed out, there is one and one only so that none may despair, but one and one only so that none may presume. Before we finish the study, you are going to see the absolute necessity not only of having eternal life before you die, but the manifestation of eternal life is going to be rather clear and plain as well.

The phrase "eternal life" occurs twenty-six times in the New Testament. The phrase "life eternal" occurs four times. In order to answer the question properly, "Do you possess eternal life?" you and I must mine the Scriptures and find out what eternal life really, genuinely, and truly is, so that we may answer the question properly.

The Question of Works and the Law

I chose each of these four texts for a very simple reason. Three refer to the rich young ruler: Matthew 19, Mark 10, and Luke 18. Luke 10 refers to a lawyer. Each of these individuals asked the same question: "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

They were concerned about eternal life, and each wanted to do something to make sure that he had it. They were seemingly willing to do anything to get it. Interestingly enough, our Lord gave both the same answer. When the rich young ruler and the lawyer asked, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" He said, "Keep the commandments." He did not say, "Repent and believe." He responded, "Keep the commandments."

Why would He give that answer? Both the rich young ruler and the lawyer had been taught by the Jewish teachers that men must do something, or by their works somehow earn and merit eternal life. That was a religious system; that was what they had been taught.

The rich young ruler had lived a seemingly blameless life when our Lord told him, “Thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not commit adultery, honour thy father and thy mother.”

His response was, “These things am I kept from my youth up.” Outwardly, he was seemingly blameless, and yet he was anxious because he knew something was wrong. He knew that somehow he might not have eternal life, and therefore he was willing to do something to get it.

Why did our Lord tell each of these men, when they asked, “What shall I do to inherit eternal life?” Why did He say, “Keep the commandments”? Is keeping the commandments a way to eternal life?

Is keeping the commandments a way to eternal life? The answer is yes—and no. Remember the question: “What must I do to inherit eternal life?” If you want to do something to merit and earn eternal life, then the answer is, keep the commandments. Turn in your Bible to Galatians chapter three, and let me explain it to you. Begin reading with verse ten:

“For as many as of the works of the law are under the curse. For it is written, Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. But that no man is justified by the law on the side of God, it is evident, for the just shall live by faith, and the law is not of faith, but the man that doeth them shall live in them.”

Look again at verse 10: “For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse, for it is written, Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all the things which are written in the book of the law to do them.”

When I said that you could answer yes to the question, “Can you? Is it salvation by keeping the commandments?” I meant that they asked, “What must I do?” In other words, they wanted to do something. The Lord said, “Keep the commandments.” But when you put yourself under that, you also put yourself under the curse of the law. Why? Because the law demands three things: personal obedience, perfect obedience, and perpetual obedience. Therefore, the man who is going to earn, merit, or do something to earn his

salvation must keep God's law personally, perfectly, and perpetually. Now my question is, can anyone do that? What's the answer? No.

That is why God says you are under a curse if you try to earn salvation by keeping the law. Let us suppose Joe decides to keep God's law and, from this day forward, never sins again—neither internally nor externally. He is perfect from this day forward; he keeps God's law personally, perfectly, and perpetually. Does he earn salvation? No. What about the sins he committed before he became perfect? He is still under the curse of God because he is still a sinner. He has not kept the law from birth, personally, perfectly, and perpetually. The truth is that no one can be saved by keeping the law.

But if you ask, "What must I do?" in that sense of the word, if you really want to do something, the proper answer is, "Keep the commandments of God." Why would our Lord say that? To demonstrate that they cannot keep the commandments of God. The rich young ruler said, "All these have I kept from my youth." Simply quoting the law of God was not sufficient for him. Our Lord then said, "All right, I'll tell you what you do if you want to be perfect."

"Go and sell everything that you have. Give it to the poor, take up your cross, and follow me." The rich young man went away exceedingly sorrowful, the Bible says, for he had great riches. What did our Lord do when He told him to sell everything, give it to the poor, take up his cross, and follow Him? When God saved you, how many sold everything they had and gave it to the poor? Not a person. Is that a requirement to be saved? The answer is no.

Why, then, did our Lord tell him that? He was taking a straight pin and pricking his bubble, bursting it, showing him that he thought he had kept the commandments. He had not even kept the first one: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me," because his money was his god. Our Lord was no longer merely quoting the commandments to the rich young ruler; He was applying the law to show him that he had not kept the commandments.

The Promise of Eternal Life

Very obviously, then, when you ask the question, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" the answer is, Keep the commandments. But

can you keep them? The answer is absolutely no. God's law was really and truly never, ever given as a means for justification.

Consider with me the promise of eternal life. To whom was the promise of eternal life given, and when was it given? It may surprise you. Titus 1:1–2 says: "Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness, in hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began."

When did God promise eternal life? Before the world began. Obviously, it could not have been promised to you and I individually at that particular time, because we did not have an existence before the world began. But the Bible says very plainly that God promised eternal life before the world began. Now the phrase "before the world began" is a contracted expression literally for purpose before the world began or before the ages of time. Eternal life was something that was purposed and promised by God before the world began. It is a gift of grace and the result of the eternal purpose before the world began.

If eternal life is a promise, it is therefore free grace and not by the works of the law. The works of the law are inconsistent with a promise. In fact, that is what Paul argues in the book of Galatians. This promise was given to us by a God who cannot lie. Since He cannot deceive, nor be deceived, and since this promise was made before the foundation of the world, it had to be made with a mediator, someone who was set up to be the Redeemer before the world ever began.

The Bible says very plainly that this eternal life was promised before the world began. To whom was it promised? Hebrews 13:20 says, "Now, the God of peace that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the everlasting covenant." Underline that in your Bibles: through the blood of the everlasting covenant, or the eternal covenant.

What in the world are we talking about in Hebrews 13:20? There was a covenant entered into between God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost before the world ever began. What did God

the Father do? God the Father gave to God the Son a people. You say, "Show me that in the Bible." Look in John 17, verse 6: "I have manifested by name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world. Thine they were, and thou gavest them me, and they have kept thy word."

In verse 11 He says, "And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world. I come to thee, Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one as we are one." Then look in verse 24: "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am." Note that there were men given to Jesus Christ. The Father gave a gift to Jesus Christ.

What did our Lord then agree to do in this covenant? He agreed to become their substitute and to redeem them. That was His work in the covenant: to become the substitute for those whom the Father had given Him and to redeem them. Turn to Galatians 4 and look at verses 4 and 5.

The Everlasting Covenant

"But when the fullness of time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." Why did Jesus Christ come? He came to redeem us. He came as our substitute. The Father has given to God the Son a gift of people, and God the Son has agreed to come, die, and redeem those people. The Holy Spirit has agreed to regenerate and convert those people. "And because you were sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." Thus there is a covenant between God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost: the Father gave people to the Son, the Son agreed to redeem them, and the Holy Spirit agreed to convert them. Titus 3:5 says, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but by his own mercy he saved us by the washing and regeneration of the Holy Ghost."

Ephesians chapter one beautifully spells out what has just been described. "According as he, that is God the Father, hath chosen us in him, that is in God the Son, before the foundation of the world, that we should behold him without blame before him in love." As the

Father chose us, He gave us to Christ, “having predestined us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ, to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He, that is, God the Father, hath made us accepted in the Beloved, that is, in Jesus Christ, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.” The work of the Father was given us to the Son.

The work of the Son is redeeming us. “That we should be to the praise of His glory who first trusted in Christ and whom you also trust after that you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and whom also after that you believe you were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise.” So those whom the Father gave to the Son, the Son redeemed; those whom the Son redeemed, the Holy Spirit of God then regenerated.

We must conclude, then, primarily, that the promise of eternal life was given peculiarly to God the Son in the everlasting covenant. Now, what happened when Jesus Christ finished His work? In John chapter 17, the high priestly prayer of Christ, He says, “I have glorified thee on earth. I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was. I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world. Thine they were. Thou gavest them me, and they have kept thy word.”

“Now they have not known. Now they have known all those things whatsoever thou hast given me are thee. For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me, and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out of thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me. I pray for them, I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me, for they are thine.”

Our Lord said, “We entered into a covenant. You gave me a work to do. I finished that work. Now, Lord, let me have my reward.” His reward, of course, was the conversion and the regeneration of His people.

There is another aspect of this promise. It is true that the promise was given to Jesus Christ peculiarly. Why? Because Jesus Christ is

the mediator, the federal head and representative of His people. He was the second party in that everlasting covenant. That is true. We did not have a physical existence before the foundation of the world. But if you look in your Bibles to Ephesians chapter 1 and verse 4, the Bible says, “According as He, that is God the Father, hath chosen us in Him, that is in Christ, before the foundation of the world.”

Although we did not have a physical existence before the foundation of the world, we did have an existence in the mind and in the purpose of God before the foundation of the world. What is clearly implied in Ephesians 1:4 is said very emphatically in 2 Timothy 1:9. The promise was made to Jesus Christ peculiarly, and yet at the same time, it was given to us in a particular way, in that we were in Christ.

Paul says in verse 8, “Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me as prisoner, but be thou a partaker of the affliction of the gospel according to the power of God.” Now he is going to tell you some things about the power of God. “Who have saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works.” Have you stopped there to think about this? Not one thing you ever did earned or merited God’s attention. What does he say? “Who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works. But according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.”

When did you and I receive grace? Before the world began, but only in Jesus Christ and only through Jesus Christ. When were you given grace? The answer is, before the world began. We conclude, then, that the promise was made to Christ in a peculiar manner, since He was the second party in the eternal covenant. He is our federal Head and Representative, but the promise was also given to us particularly, in the fact that we were in Him and God chose us in Him.

First and foremost, then, is the promise of eternal life. It was promised to Christ as the Head of the people, and it was given particularly to those who were in Him. Secondly, consider the presentation of eternal life.

The Presentation of Eternal Life

Titus chapter one, verses one through three, says: “Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God’s elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness; in hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began; but hath in due times manifested his word through preaching, which is committed unto me according to the commandment of God our Saviour.”

God made this promise before the world began. In verse two, He made the promise before the world began; but in verse three, He says that He has in due times manifested that promise through the preaching of the gospel. What was promised in eternity is now manifested in time and in history through the preaching of the gospel. This promise was manifested through the preaching of the Apostle Paul, the other apostles, and the prophets; hence, we have an absolute assurance of its veracity and accuracy.

This eternal life, promised before the world began, is actually given in time and history. It is presented and bestowed upon individuals in time and history. Eternal life is not something that can be earned, merited, or worked for; neither can it be received as a reward by you and me. It is simply a gift. I am going to explain what that gift is next week, but let me go on: it is a gift given in grace, based upon the person and work of Jesus Christ. Therefore, the promise was given in eternity, but it is manifested in time and history.

Now, let me just show you what I mean when I say it is a gift. Look in your Bible to John 10, verse 28. Very quickly, several passages. John 10, verse 28. Look at what our Lord says. This is a great passage where the Lord is the shepherd of the sheep. He's the good shepherd. He gives his life for the sheep. Look at verse 27. Our Lord says, "My sheep hear my voice and I know them 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." Now, look what he said. I what? I give unto them eternal life. Eternal life is a gift. It is something that God gives. Look

in your Bibles to Romans 5 and verse 21. Romans 5 verse 21. Romans 5 verse 21.

"That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life." Now look, "by or through Jesus Christ our Lord." Righteousness is to reign unto eternal life by or through Jesus Christ our Lord. Look in Romans 6 verse 23, you can quote this one I know, "...for the wages of sin is death, but The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ, our Lord." Notice it's a gift. Look in First John. Chapter two and verse twenty five. First John two, verse twenty five, just demonstrating that eternal life is preeminently a gift. First John two and verse twenty five, the word of God says this, "And this is the promise. That he promised us even eternal life."

Now stop and think about this. John says that this is the promise that he promised us even eternal life. What did he promise us eternal life before the world began? John said, here it is in time and in history, it's real, it's genuine. Now look in your Bibles to John 5, 1 John 5. Since you're there, 1 John 5, let's begin reading with verse 11. I'm going to show you why eternal life is a gift. 1 John 5 verse 11, "And this is the record that God had given to us eternal life. And this life is where? In his son." Now let me just stop there. This life is in his son. The only source of eternal life is Jesus Christ. It's not found anywhere else. It's not found in Allah. It's not found in Shintoism or Buddhism or Hinduism. It's not found in Judaism. The only source of eternal life is Jesus Christ. Now watch. "And this is the record that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son."

Now watch verse 12. "He that hath the Son hath life." That is eternal life. "He that hath not the Son of God hath not eternal life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may believe on the name of the Son of God." Isn't that interesting? Eternal life is a gift. Is because Jesus Christ is eternal life. And what did the Apostle Paul say in reference to the father giving us his son? He said, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift." Jesus Christ is indeed eternal life.

Now the point is very direct. I want you to go back in your Bibles to John 17. The only way that anyone can receive eternal life. Is. As a

gift from Christ, because Christ is eternal life, look in John 17. And verse two, we're going to come back to this first, because I know you're going to have questions, but look at it. John 17, verse two. In fact, let's read verse one just so that you can see that Jesus Christ is in the context. "These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come. Glorify my Son, that my Son also may glorify Thee, as Thou hast given Him, that is Christ, power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him." Note that He should give eternal life. The same Christ who gives repentance and faith is the same Christ who gives eternal life. He is eternal life, and that life is in Him. Without Him, there is no life.

And we can have absolute assurance that we have eternal life when we have Jesus Christ, for He is life. And there is no other source of life. So the promise of eternal life was first and foremost given to Christ, peculiarly And then to us particularly who were chosen in him, the presentation of eternal life is the fact that it is a gift not only from God the Father in Christ, but it is also a gift from Christ to his people.

And then thirdly today, I'm going to spend the rest of my time on this point. I want you to see the possessors of eternal life. I haven't yet told you what eternal life is, and I won't until next Sunday. But I'm going to tell you, it's absolutely phenomenal when you see it. OK? Possessors of eternal life. Those who possess eternal life are identified in the scriptures in various ways.

The Possessors of Eternal Life

The Possessors of Eternal Life: Divine Side

Sometimes you will read the phrase, “my elect.” Sometimes it is John 10, “the sheep.” Sometimes it is Ephesians 5, “the church.” Sometimes it is “those who believe.” Sometimes, like in Revelation 17 verse 14, they are called “the chosen” or “the faithful.” There are various names given to identify the individuals who possess eternal life. However, for simplicity, we can reduce the point basically to two distinct views.

I have tried to teach you over the years that when you study the Bible, you must remember that every positive has a negative. That means every negative has a positive. But you must also look at things from the divine side and, for a better word, from the human side as well. Most people will always look at it from man's side, and they never look at it from God's side. But there is a divine side of truth, just like there is a human side of truth.

Now, I want to show you the possessors of eternal life. I want to show you the divine side to begin with and then conclude with the human side. The possessors of eternal life are, number one, from the divine side, those who were given by the Father to Jesus Christ before the foundation of the world.

Look in John 6, verse 37: "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me, and him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me." There was indeed a people given to Christ by the Father. He said so. Look in verse 39: "And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day." Isn't that plain?

Now go back to John 17. Look at verse 6: "I manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world. Thine they were, thou gavest them me." Twice he says that in verse 6. Look in verse 11: "But now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world. And I come to thee, Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me." And then in verse 24: "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me."

I do not know how you can read a passage like that and say, "Well, there were none given to Christ." Yes, there were some given to Christ before the foundation of the world. I do not know who they are or how many there are, but there was a people given to Christ before the foundation of the world. The Bible says so over and over.

To demonstrate that, since you are in John 17, look first at verse 9. After our Lord speaks about all those whom the Father has given Him, He says, "I pray for them. I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me, for they are thine." Did you hear what He

said? “I pray for them.” He is praying for someone specifically, those whom the Father has given Him. He is not praying for the world.

Now look at John 17:2. Our Lord says, “As God has given him, that is Christ, power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as God has given him.” Let me ask several questions. How much power, authority, and jurisdiction has been given to Jesus Christ? All. Matthew 28:18 says, “All authority in heaven and earth is given unto me.” First Peter 3:22 says, “All authorities and principalities and powers are put under him.” Jesus Christ has all authority in heaven and in earth. If He has all, there is none left to anyone else.

Are there any individuals over whom Christ does not have authority? No. He has power over all flesh. Does Christ have sufficient power to save all? Yes. He is omnipotent; He is God; He is all-powerful. There is no limitation.

But how many will Christ save? The answer is, as many as the Father has given to Him. John 17:2 says that He should give eternal life “to as many as thou hast given him.” You say, “We do not see that.” Who are they? How would I know? I was not there. If that is not plain enough, look in your Bibles at Acts 13:48.

"And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord. And as many as were ordained to eternal life believed." Now, someone tell me how many believed? As many as were ordained to eternal life.

Look at the phrase in verse 48, "and as many as." If you go back to John 17:2, you will see that same phrase: "as thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as." I hope everyone in this room understands that the phrase "as many as" implies a limitation. It implies a certain number. No one in this room is going to say, "Brother Weaver, everybody's going to be saved," unless you are a universalist. You know as well as I do that not everybody is going to be saved. What did our Lord say? "These shall go away in everlasting punishment."

Matthew 14:36 shows that there is a limitation when you hear the term "as many as": "And we saw him that they might only touch the hem of his garment. And as many as touched were made perfectly

whole." Was everyone made perfectly whole? No, just as many as touched Him. "As many as" implies a limitation.

Do you remember John 1? "He came unto his own, but his own received him not, but to as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God." "As many as" is a limiting term. I could say, as many as go to Old Times Buffet after service today, Henry will buy their dinner. If you do not go, you are not in that "as many as," are you? It is a limited number. Thankfully, we are eating here today, Henry. You are off the hook.

Very obviously, the Bible says that our Lord is going to give eternal life to whom? To as many as the Father has given Him.

Do not come with this kind of argument and say, “Now, Brother Weaver, if I believe that, then I wouldn’t even preach.” If you are a preacher and God has called you to preach, first, you had better believe it. Second, whom does He tell us to preach the gospel to? Every creature. Whether they believe or not is immaterial. We must preach because God commanded it.

I do not believe that everybody is going to be saved, but I do believe and know that some will be saved by God’s grace. You say, “Well, if I believe that, I just preach to the elect.” If you could put a little black mark on their forehead, I might do that. But I would not even do that, because God told me to preach to every creature. I do not know who they are, and neither do you.

But the Bible says, from the divine side, that Christ will give eternal life to as many as the Father has given Him. Now let us take it from the human side. God’s gift of a people to Christ does not negate responsibility. The evidence that we have been given to Christ in eternity past is that we will come to Him in time and history.

The Possessors of Eternal Life: Human Side

Our Lord said, “All that the Father giveth me shall come to me.” We are not only invited to Christ; we must come to Christ, and we must come to Him in repentance and faith. In coming to Christ in repentance, we leave our sins, our rebellion, our self-worth, and our self-righteousness. In coming to Him in faith, we believe only in

Him, embrace Him, and trust Him alone as the Savior and the salvation of man.

We must come to Christ. We have been commanded to come to Christ. I am going to explain this over the next several weeks because several individuals have asked me to explain a few concepts. I will take a whole message to do so. The Bible says that we have been commanded to repent. Repentance is God's gift, and you cannot repent without Him giving you the gift of repentance. But you are responsible to seek Him for repentance if you have been commanded to repent.

The Bible says, "And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ." If we have been commanded to believe on His Son Jesus Christ, that means we must seek Him for faith. That is responsibility.

The Bible says that God has commanded all men to repent. Are all men going to repent? No. Are all men going to believe? No. But they still have a responsibility. Do you realize we are God's creatures? God is still sovereign over His creation. He still has the right to command. Moreover, we are sinners, and we owe Him repentance and faith. We have a responsibility to turn from our sins and turn from our rebellion, because we have sinned against a gracious Creator and a loving, merciful God.

Let me show you how this works so beautifully in Scripture. Turn in your Bibles to First Thessalonians, chapter 1. In verse 2, the Apostle Paul says, "We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers, remembering without ceasing your work of faith and labored love and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God, our Father. Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God." Hold it. Stop right there. Paul is writing these Thessalonian Christians, and he says, "Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God." How did Paul know that these Thessalonian believers were God's elect?

Did he get a long ladder and climb up into heaven and look in the Lamb's Book of Life? No. How did Paul know that these were God's elect, whom He chose before the foundation of the world? The answer is given to us in the rest of the chapter. Look at verse 4:

"Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God." Paul, how do you know they are God's elect?

"For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance, as you know what manner of men we were among you for your sakes. And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word of the Lord in much affliction with joy of the Holy Ghost, so that you were examples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia. For from you sounded out the word of the Lord, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God were to spread abroad, so that we need not speak anything, for they themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, who delivers from the wrath to come."

How did Paul know they were God's elect? He said, "I can tell you how I know: when we preached to you, the Word of God came in power, and you were converted. You became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word of the Lord in much affliction." When you were persecuted, you never gave up the Word; you held on to the faith. Moreover, from you sounded out the word of God. You preached, taught, and shared it. You turned from your sins, embraced the one true and living God, and eagerly waited for the return of Jesus Christ.

How did Paul know that they were God's elect? The answer is because they repented, believed, and came to Christ in time and in history, evidencing that in their lives. If our lives are in line with the Word of God—if we have been converted and regenerated, and our lives are lives of obedience—why are we like that? Only because Christ has given us eternal life.

That demonstrates that we are one of those who was chosen in Him before the foundation of the world. I was preaching in New Orleans, and a woman came up to me after service one night, weeping profusely. I had never even dealt with this subject, but it was really bothering her. I asked her, “Well, what is your problem?” She said, “I just don’t know whether or not I’m one of God’s elect.”

She said, “I want to be. I want to be holy. I want to be godly. I want to love Him. I want to serve Him.” I had to bite my tongue to keep from laughing in her face. You say, “Well, we’ve got nothing to laugh about.” But let me tell you something, folks. If you have a longing to be holy and obedient and serve Christ, if you were not His elect, you would not even be concerned about it. You follow me? The very fact that she was concerned demonstrates it. Those who hate Him never, ever give Him a thought.

Application: Seek Christ

Now, before I close, I want to try to tie something together for you. Turn in your Bibles to 2 Kings chapter 7. Lord willing, I am going to explain some things more fully next Sunday. But I want you to see that God’s eternal purpose does not negate our responsibility.

In this passage, you have to understand that the Syrians had encompassed Samaria. Samaria was the capital of Israel at that time, and the Israelites inside the city could not go outside. If they went outside, the Syrians would kill them; if they stayed inside the city, they would starve to death. So they were in a predicament. Now watch: “And there were four leprous men at the entering into the gate, and they said one to another, Why sit we here until we die? And if we say we will enter into the city, then the famine is in the city, and we shall die there. And if we sit here, we shall die also.”

"Now therefore, come and let us fall into the host of the Syrians. If they save us alive, we shall live. If they will kill us, we shall but die." They rose up in the twilight to go into the camp of the Syrians. When they came to the uttermost part of the camp, behold, there was no man there. For the Lord had made the host of the Syrians to hear a noise of chariots and horses, even the noise of a great host. They said, "Lo, the king of Israel hath hired against us the kings of the Hittites and the kings of the Egyptians to come upon us." Therefore they rose and fled, leaving their tents, horses, and axes, even the camp as it was, and fled for their lives. When the lepers came to the outermost part of the camp, they went into one tent, ate and drank, carried silver and gold, and hid it. Then they entered another tent, carried this also, and hid it.

Then they said one to another, "we do not dwell. This day is a day of good tidings and we hold our peace. If we tarry till the morning light, some mischief will come upon us." "Now, therefore, come that we may go and tell the king's household."

The Syrians had surrounded Samaria. If anyone came out of the city, he was killed. Starvation was stalking the city. It was so bad that they were not only eating doves' dung, but women were killing and eating their own children. Here were four lepers sitting at the gate of the city. Why were they sitting there? They could not go into the city. How did the lepers live? They ate the garbage thrown over the city walls. But if there was a famine in the city, no garbage was being thrown over. Look at what they said: "Why sit we here till we die? If we go into the city, we'll die. If we sit here, we'll die. Come, let us fall to the Syrians. They may save us a life, but if they kill us, we won't be any more dead then than we are now." Doesn't that make good sense? They said, "What's the difference? We can die by the sword as easy as we can die by starvation. But it may be they would save us alive."

Here are sinners, people who do not know Christ, people who are unsaved. They sit back and say, "Well, if God gave to Christ the people before the foundation of the world, I may not be in that people. How in the world would I know, and why in the world should I go?" Well, let me ask you a question.

If you're lost, doomed and damned and on your way to hell, if you went to Christ and begged Him for mercy, repentance, and faith, and suppose He said no, would you be any more damned than you already are? The answer is no. But when you go to Christ and beg Him for repentance and faith, guess what?

John 6, verse 37: "All that the Father giveth me shall come unto me, and him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." When you come and beg Him for repentance and faith, and He gives you repentance and faith, you're going to say, "Thank God. The Father gave some to Christ, because I'm in it now."

Most people try to confuse God's sovereignty and man's responsibility. Man is always responsible. God is always sovereign. If you come to Christ in true repentance and true faith, I don't care

who you are, I can assure you that Christ will not cast you out. "All that the Father giveth me"—that's the divine side—"shall come unto me. And he that cometh unto me"—that's the human side—"I shall in no wise cast out." So if you're unconverted, why sit you there till you die? Seek Christ. When you seek Him, you'll find that He saves sinners and receives all that come unto Him in repentance and faith. When you come, you'll find out you're one of those that was given to Him before the foundation of the world.

Let's pray. Father, we ask that You speak to our hearts today, teach us, build us up in the most holy faith, and give us grace to serve Thee acceptably with reverence and godly fear. Help us, Lord, to worship Thee and to praise Thee for Thy infinite grace and mercy. In Christ's name we ask, Amen.

CHAPTER 2

Do You Possess Eternal Life? - 2

Review of Part 1

Today is the second part of the message, “Do You Possess Eternal Life?”, which I started last week. In Matthew 19:16, we read: “And behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?” In Mark 10:17, we have the rich young ruler asking the same question: “And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?”

Then in Luke 10, we have a lawyer asking the same question. Luke 10:25 says: “And behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” Finally, in Luke 18:18, once again we have this rich young ruler and the same question: “And a certain ruler asked him, saying, Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?”

I began last week by asking this question: Do you possess eternal life? I told you that this is probably the most important question that you would ever be asked. In my introduction, I said that many times people answer that question with some response like, “I think so. I hope so. I’m working on it. Maybe so. Or we’ll see.” If any of those are your responses, then in all probability, you do not possess eternal life.

I gave you several fallacies that were very patently untrue. The first one is that eternal life is simply living forever. If eternal life is living forever, then the unsaved would have it as well, for they would be living forever in torments. Very obviously, eternal life is more than just living forever.

Another fallacy that I pointed out was that some people think they receive eternal life only after they die, which is not true. Most people want to live an ungodly, unholy life and do their own thing, and then, when they die, presto, somehow they become automatically holy and automatically godly, and then enjoy the presence of God. That is certainly not true. It was Balaam, the false prophet, who said, “Let me die the death of the righteous.” But he did not want to live the life of the righteous.

Last week we looked at three points: the promise of eternal life, the presentation of eternal life, and the possessors of eternal life.

Under the promise of eternal life, the promise was given to us before the foundation of the world. In fact, that is what the Bible says in Titus chapter 1, verses 2 and 3. Therefore, since it was given to us before the foundation of the world, it had to be given first and foremost to the Lord Jesus Christ as our federal head and representative.

Very obviously, there was that eternal covenant, which the Bible speaks of in Hebrews 13 and verse 20, entered into between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Moreover, the Bible tells us in 2 Timothy chapter 1 and verse 9 that grace was given unto us also before the foundation of the world. Although the promise was primarily to Jesus Christ as our mediator and as our federal head and representative, it was also given to us because we were in Christ before the foundation of the world. The Bible says in Ephesians 1

and verse 4 that God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world.

The second point was that eternal life is a gift—the presentation of eternal life. Over and over, Jesus Christ said, “I give unto them eternal life and they shall never perish.” Eternal life cannot be merited, earned, or received as a reward. It is simply a gift.

Eternal life is found in Jesus Christ because Jesus Christ is Himself eternal life. We looked at a number of passages demonstrating that eternal life is a gift. Thirdly, we looked at the possessors of eternal life. To understand that, you must comprehend it from two sides: first, the divine side, and second, the human side. From the divine side, Jesus Christ said that He gave eternal life to as many as the Father had given unto Him.

That is, there is an elect. There was a people given unto Jesus Christ. From the human side, it is as many as come to Him in repentance and faith. John 6:37 shows both of these principles: “All that the Father had given him shall come unto him.” And then He said, “And him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.” So you have the Father giving them to Him, but you also have the responsibility of those who have been given to come to Christ.

In 2 Kings 7, lepers sat at the gate of the city and asked, “Why sit we here till we die?” There was starvation in the city, and the way the lepers lived was that scraps were thrown over the wall. No scraps were being thrown over the wall because the city was starving. If they went into the city, they died. If they sat there, they died. Finally, they said, “Come, let us fall to the Syrians,” who had surrounded the city.

They said, “It may be that they save us alive, but if they kill us, we'll just be dead.” In other words, they were not going to be any deader by the sword than they were by starvation. They were still going to be dead.

The application is simple: it is your responsibility to seek Christ for repentance and faith. Suppose you went to Christ and begged Him for salvation, repentance, and faith, and He said, “No way, I'm not going to save you.” The question is, would you be any more damned then than you are now? The answer is no. But the Scripture

says, “All that the Father giveth me shall come unto me, and he that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.” When you come to Christ in repentance and faith, you will be received, and you will thank God that there is a people who have been given to the Son by the Father.

The Command to Lay Hold on Eternal Life

Most people tend to think that eternal life is simply living forever. If you interpret eternal life as merely living forever, then certain passages in the Bible need an explanation. In 1 Timothy 6:11, Paul writes to Timothy, “But thou, O man of God, flee these things, follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.” Timothy is called a man of God. He is already a Christian and already a believer. Yet Paul tells him to lay hold on eternal life.

Paul says again, concerning believers who are rich, “Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.” Go back to verse 17: “Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.” In verse 12, Paul is specifically talking about Timothy. In verse 19, he is talking about believers that are rich. He tells them not to be highminded, nor to trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, and to do good, be rich in good works, ready to distribute, and willing to communicate. If eternal life is simply living forever, these passages require an explanation.

If eternal life is simply living forever in heaven, or living forever in the eternal state, why was Timothy commanded in verse 12 to lay hold on eternal life as a man of God, which he could not possibly attain until he had died and gone to heaven? Why were believers charged, in verse 19, once again to lay hold of eternal life? If eternal life is only living forever and you receive it only when you die, how can there be a command in the Bible to lay hold of eternal life?

The word “lay hold” is from the Greek word epilambanomai. It is translated numerous times and in numerous ways in our Bibles as “take,” “take by,” “catch,” “take on,” “hold on,” “take hold of,” and “lay hold upon.” Here, then, is the command where Timothy and other believers are commanded to lay hold of eternal life. If eternal life is simply living forever in heaven, how could they be commanded to lay hold on it? Obviously, they could not get it until they died.

Matthew Poole, in his commentary, says that the admonition to lay hold on eternal life refers to a right and title to it, which Paul calls Timothy to lay hold on by a metaphor drawn from those exercised in their games who did what they could first to lay hold of the prizes proposed to conquerors. Matthew Poole is pretty good on most things, but he says that all Paul is referring to when he tells Timothy and other believers to lay hold of eternal life is their right and title to it.

I believe it can be demonstrated from Scripture that when the Apostle Paul commands Timothy and other believers to lay hold of eternal life, he is not speaking simply of a right and title, but rather of an exercise and enjoyment of that eternal life now in time and in history.

It is true that we will not experience the fullness, completeness, and totality of eternal life until glory. But if you do not have it now, you are not getting it then. There is an application, an apprehension, a laying hold of eternal life now in time and history, but its fullness will only come in glory. Now let me show you why we are to embrace eternal life now in time and history.

Eternal Life as Participation in Christ

In John chapter 6, beginning with verse 54, Jesus Christ is presenting Himself as the bread of life:

“Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. This is that bread which came down from heaven. Not as

your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live forever."

Now, let me stop there for a moment. This passage demonstrates our participation in eternal life. You say, "What are you talking about?" Many of you probably have read, or at least have heard of, the book written by Thomas à Kempis, The Imitation of Christ, where he is, of course, wanting you and me to imitate Christ. Let me tell you, Christianity is not an imitation of Christ. It is a participation in Christ.

John 6 does not refer to the Roman Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation. You may not know what transubstantiation is. Let me say this: the central article in the Roman Catholic Church is the altar, because on that altar is where they have Mass. Have you ever noticed that in Protestant and Reformed churches, you usually went up by stairs into the pulpit? Let me give you this little bit of information. The altar is central because of what they have on it.

Here the preacher is up here, and you have to sit back looking up at him. Do you know why that was done? It was done purposefully: to lift the eyes from off the altar and look up to the Word of God, to the preacher. In other words, the Protestants were saying that the central thing is the Word of God, and not the altar.

Roman Catholics teach the doctrine of transubstantiation, an unbloody sacrifice. The priest comes out with the bread and wine, says his little magical incantation, and—when he says it in Latin—that is where we get the words "hocus pocus," literally. The bread and wine are supposed to be magically transformed into the actual flesh and blood of Christ. Thus, if you believe in transubstantiation, when you take communion in the Roman Catholic Church, you are actually a cannibal, because you are supposed to be eating the flesh and drinking the blood of Jesus Christ. They say this because He said in John 6, "If you don't eat my flesh and drink my blood, you don't have eternal life."

But John 6 does not teach or refer to transubstantiation. Moreover, it does not refer to what we know as the Lord's Supper, because the Lord's Supper was instituted only shortly before His death.

What, then, is John 6 teaching us? It teaches that salvation is a participation in Jesus Christ, a life based upon His life, where He is our food and our drink. In order for His flesh to be eaten, it must first be broken; in order for His blood to be drunk, it must first be spilled. He is speaking of His own sacrifice, where He will give Himself for His people. He is to be our salvation, and therefore we appropriate everything that Jesus Christ is and everything that Jesus Christ has done by faith.

How many of you need food and drink every day? Every hand. How many of you like to eat several times a day? I can look and tell—even I do.

What in the world is our Lord talking about when He says that He is our meat and our drink? We understand that we need to eat every day, even several times a day. We need food daily; some of us need it on an hourly basis. Just as you need food daily and many times a day, likewise, you need Me. Because I am your life. I am the One who sustains you, nourishes you, and gives you life.

Look at John 6:54. Our Lord says, "Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day." Let me tell you something important about that verse. In the Greek, it is in the present tense. Here is how it would read: "Whoso is continually eating my flesh and continually drinking my blood is having eternal life."

What am I trying to tell you? Eternal life is a present phenomenon. It is not something you get after you die. He said that if you are participating in Him, if your life is revolving around Him, and if you are being sustained and nourished by Him, you are right now having eternal life.

Inevitably, the question comes: "But Brother Weaver, how do we eat and drink Jesus Christ?" Our Lord tells us. After He taught this, many who professed to believe in Him left Him. In John 6:67, Jesus said unto the twelve, "Will ye also go away?" Then Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go?" "Thou hast the words of eternal life."

Go back to verse 63: "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit,

and they are life." How do we eat and drink Jesus Christ? By devouring His Word as the Holy Spirit of God makes that Word real to us, applying it to our lives and bringing our lives into conformity to His Word. Every day, as I read my Bible, see His truth, rejoice in Him, and bring my life into conformity to His Word, I am eating and drinking Jesus Christ. When I pray to Him, I am eating and drinking Jesus Christ. It is His words. It is the truth that sets us free, because He is Freedom itself.

The Principle of Eternal Life

Romans 8:29 says that we have been predestinated to be conformed to His image. How are we conformed into His image? By eating and drinking His flesh and blood, which are His words.

Second Corinthians 3:17–18 gives a wonderful illustration: "Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass"—or in a mirror, as we study in His Word—"the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." As we look into the mirror of His Word, and as the Holy Spirit applies that Word, we are continually transformed and changed into the image of Christ. We are participating in Him and being conformed to Him by the Spirit and by the Word of God.

The Principle of Eternal Life: Knowing God

If you have not yet figured out what eternal life really is, here is the fourth and final point: the principle of eternal life. In John 17, which we looked at in great detail last week, we did not cover verse 3. This is the high priestly prayer of our Lord. John 17:1 says, "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"—there it is—"that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him."

You may say, "Wait a minute, Brother Weaver, he's giving eternal life." Yes, but what is eternal life? He explains it in verse 3: "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." What is eternal life? It is an

intimate knowledge of the one true and living God and His Son Jesus Christ.

Now, I want you to listen very carefully because I'm going to give you two quotes. I'm only going to give you these two quotes to show you that what I am going to teach you is not something new. It's been around for a long time. But Albert Barnes, in his commentary on John, says this, the word "know" in John 17, verse 3—"And this is eternal life that they may know thee the only true God"—Barnes says the word "know" here, as in other places, expresses more than a mere speculative acquaintance with the character and perfections of God. It includes all the impressions of the mind and life with a just view of God and of the Savior's fitted to produce.

It includes, of course, love, reverence, obedience, honor, gratitude, supreme affection. To know God as He is, to know God as He is, is to know and regard Him as a lawgiver, a sovereign, a parent, and a friend; is to yield the whole soul to Him and strive to obey His law.

Now, let me just stop there. He said the word "know" here, as in other places, expresses more than a mere speculative acquaintance with the character and the perfections of God. One other quote. On the eclectic notes of John, here's this quote: "True knowledge here was not outward protection or future hope, but the communication in life of communion with the being thus known to the soul, of communion with God Himself fully known as the Father and the Son." Let me just stop there. Each of these individuals have said that eternal life is not just a mere intellectual or historical knowledge of God. I've heard people say all my life, "Do you believe in Jesus Christ?" "Yes."

"Do you believe He actually lived, died, was buried and resurrected and ascended to heaven?" "Yes." "Well, good. You're a believer then." Let me tell you something, folks. Just because you have an intellectual knowledge or a historical fact does not make you a Christian. That is a mere speculative knowledge. Allow me to show you that eternal life is knowledge, but the essence of life eternal is a specific knowledge. As Barnes pointed out, it is something more than speculative. It is more than historical. It is more than intellectual. It

is a knowledge of the most intimate nature. It is personal, it is intimate, and it is complete in one sense of the word.

Let me give you a contrast. The knowledge that is eternal life is not speculative, but practical. It is not theoretical, but experiential. It is not intellectual, but spiritual. It is not inactive, but it is active and saving. I want you to look at John 17, verse 3. Look what our Lord says. "And this is life eternal." You know what it is? This is what it is: "that they might know thee."

“The only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.” The word “know” is from the Greek word ginōskō. That word is translated 186 times in our Bibles. The word ginōskō means to learn, to know, to come to know, to get a knowledge of, perceive, to feel, or to become known. But let me show you how intimate of a word it is. This is not a mere speculative knowledge. It is not a mere intellectual knowledge. It is not a mere historical knowledge. It is indeed intimate and it is personal.

The Depth of 'Knowing' in Scripture

The word “know” in the Bible, K-N-O-W, is used to express a deeper relationship between two persons. In fact, the word “know” is an idiom for sexual intercourse between a man and his wife. For instance, Genesis 4:1 says, “And Adam knew his wife.” What does that mean? It does not mean he merely recognized her as his wife. It is not intellectual knowledge or historical knowledge. “And Adam knew his wife. And she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the Lord.”

Look at verse 17: “And Cain knew his wife; and she conceived, and bare Enoch: and he builded a city, and called the name of the city, after the name of his son, Enoch.” Look also at verse 25: “And Adam knew his wife again; and she bare a son, and called his name Seth: For God, said she, hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel, whom Cain slew.” In each of these instances, the word “know” refers to sexual intercourse. It does not mean that Adam had to think of her name again or that Cain merely recognized his wife. The result was that she conceived and bore a child.

The same usage appears in the New Testament. Matthew 1:23 says, “Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.” All this shows that the word “know” has a greater emphasis than mere intellectual or historical knowledge.

Then Joseph being raised from sleep, that is, the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife: “And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name Jesus.” All that means is there was no intimacy between Mary and Joseph until after our Lord was born. He knew her not. Joseph certainly knew who she was intellectually and historically, but the word “know” means far more than that.

In Luke 1, verse 34, when the angel of the Lord announced to Mary that she was going to bear the Lord Jesus, she asked, “Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?” She certainly knew who Joseph was; she was engaged to him. This has nothing to do with intellect or history. She was saying, “How can this be? I know not a man. I’m a virgin. I’m pure. How can it be?” Then, of course, the Lord answered, “The power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.”

In other words, the same word is used to demonstrate that she was pure. Look in Galatians chapter 4 and verse 9: “But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God”—and notice that it is passive in the Greek. “How turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?” But now, after that ye have known God, he says, or rather are known of God. Once there has been this intimate personal relationship between you and the living God, how can you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements of this world?

Look in 1 Corinthians 8, verse 3. You will see the same thing. I am showing you the word “known,” the same word, by the way: “But if any man love God, the same is known of him.” If we love God, it is because there was a personal, intimate relationship.

Interestingly enough, if you look at John 17, verse 3, Jesus said, “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God,

and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." The word "know" is a present active subjunctive, which means that our knowledge of God is not a once-and-for-all act. It is not a once-in-a-lifetime act, but it is a constant, continual, progressive knowledge.

Knowing the Only True God and Jesus Christ

You know what eternal life is? Eternal life consists in knowing, living upon, having communion with, enjoying endless satisfaction in and with a triune God through the Lord Jesus Christ. That is what eternal life is. It is an intimate, personal relationship with God.

Now let me show you how God uses this term to describe His people. Go back in your Bibles to the book of Amos, chapter 3. Look at verse 3. Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos. Amos 3, verse 2. In fact, let us read verse 1. Look what he says: "Hear this word that the Lord hath spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt, saying," Now look what God told Israel.

"You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities." What did God mean when He said to Israel, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth"? Does that mean God did not know the Egyptians, the Assyrians, or the Babylonians? He certainly knew them, because He created them, provided for them, and judged them. But when God looked at Israel and said, "You only have I known," He meant, "You only have I had an intimate, personal relationship with. You are my people. I didn't choose anybody else."

To put it bluntly, it is like me looking at all the women in this room and then looking at Alice and saying, "You only have I known of all the women in this room." I know who the women in this room are. I can call your name. I have an intellectual knowledge of you. I have a historical knowledge of you. I believe that you actually exist. But she is the only one I have known. That is exactly what God said of Israel: "Yeah, I know who the Babylonians are. I know who the Chaldeans are. I know who the Assyrians are. But only Israel have I chosen. Only you have I been intimate with."

"I gave you my law. I gave you my priesthood. I gave you everything. You are mine."

Our Lord said, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." Just because someone makes a profession and calls Jesus Christ Lord intellectually and historically does not mean that he is a real Christian. "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name?"—that is, preached in His name—"and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?" They may say, We were good church members. We have been baptized. We gave to charity.

We did all these things. “And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.” He is not saying, “I knew you once and forgot you.” No, “I never knew you.” There was never an intimate, personal relationship between us. You say, “How can that be?” Do you realize Judas Iscariot was around our Lord for three years, worked with Him, preached with Him, but He never knew him?

Demas, Paul said, “hath forsaken me, having loved this present world.” Here is a verse that will explain what happens to a lot of people. I have heard people say, “Well, so-and-so was saved one time. He just lost it.” No, folks. He was never saved to begin with. John writes, “They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.”

When someone leaves the faith, what does John say? It is proof positive that there was never a genuine relationship to begin with. If you were ever a genuine believer to begin with, you would continue to believe. And if you cease, John says, it is proof you never were one of us to begin with. John 17:3 tells us that eternal life is a knowledge of God. First, it is a knowledge of the only true God; secondly, it is a knowledge of Jesus Christ whom He has sent. When He says that eternal life is a knowledge of God, it is a knowledge of the only true God, and that denotes that there are many who claim the title and the name of God who are not gods. But there is only one true and living God.

First Corinthians 8:5-6 says, “For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,)” A lot of false gods. “But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.”

When Scripture says, “And this is life eternal, that they may know thee the one true and the living God,” we understand that He is the Sovereign, the Supreme, the Ultimate. There is none other God but Him. I do not care about Buddha and Krishna and all these; there is only one God. Eternal life is knowing this one true and living God, the God of Scripture, the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ.

If you know who the one true and living God is, you will know that a saving knowledge of the only true God realizes the order, or economy, of salvation. As you read through Scripture, you find that the Father is always represented as supreme, the One in whom sovereign majesty resided. The Son is the One who sustains the office of Mediator. He is the sent One, and in that office He could rightly say in John 14:8, “My Father is greater than I.” How could He say that? Because He came as a servant. The Father sent Him.

But was He God? Of course He was. That is why He said in John 10, “I and my Father are one.” The Father is always represented as the Supreme; the Son is always represented as the Mediator, the One sent by the Father; and the Holy Spirit is always represented as a servant of both the Father and the Son. Thus, in the order of salvation, as in everything else, everything is of the Father through the Son in the Spirit.

What is eternal life? It is an intimate knowledge of God the Father as the only one true and living God. But second, it is knowledge of the one true and living God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent. The word “sent” is in the aorist tense, meaning a once-and-for-all act. It refers to the historic mission in which God the Father sent His Son to be the Savior and the Mediator. He is the sent One. Indeed, the title used of Jesus Christ more than any other in the Bible is “the sent one.” He uses it repeatedly to describe Himself: “the Father who hath sent me.” In John 17:3, the phrase “whom thou didst send,” or “whom thou hast sent,” sums up the supreme dignity of Jesus Christ.

There is at least a minimum of a threefold meaning in that phrase. It points to His deity, first of all. John 16:30 says, "Now are we sure that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee: by this we believe that thou camest forth from God." In other words, He came forth because of the thought of sending. So this phrase, "the sent one," first of all refers to His deity.

Secondly, it refers to His incarnation. Galatians 4:4–6 says, "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." So it points to His deity first of all and to His incarnation secondly.

Thirdly, it signifies His office as mediator and redeemer. Hebrews 3:1 says, "Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus." Do you know what the word "apostle" means? The word is apostolos in the Greek, and all it means is a sent one. An apostle of the church is someone sent out from the church. Jesus Christ is called the Apostle. Why? He is the sent one by the Father. His office is that of mediator and redeemer.

John 17:3 says, "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." John 17:3 is the only place in the Bible where Jesus Christ refers to Himself as Jesus Christ. Why? Because that shows that He is the Son of Man and also the Son of God. The name Jesus refers to the fact that He is the same. It is from the Hebrew Yehoshua, which means Savior. The word "Christ" is Christos in the Greek, which means the anointed one, pointing to the fact that He is the Messiah. He is saying, "I am the Savior and I am the promised Messiah of the Old Testament."

If one does not know Jesus Christ, then one does not know the Father. Likewise, if one does not know the Father, then he does not know Jesus Christ savingly. Do you know why? Let me show you. Look in 1 Peter 3:18.

Consider what Scripture says in 1 Peter 3:18: “For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust,” that He might bring us to God. Why did Christ suffer for sins, the just for the unjust? He

suffered that He might bring us to God. When we come to Christ savingly, Christ brings us to the Father. Therefore, if you do not know the Father, you do not know the Son; and if you do not know the Son, you do not know the Father.

The Bible says in John 5 that God has given Him power over all flesh, “that all men should honour the Son, even as”—that is, equally as—“they honour the Father.” Someone who does not believe in Jesus Christ dishonors the Father, and someone who does not believe in the Father dishonors Jesus Christ. True salvation is an intimate knowledge of God the Father and God the Son. Many claim to be Christians, but they have no regard for the Father.

Some claim to be Christians and they have no regard for the Son. And that's impossible. It is impossible to have a real, intimate, saving knowledge and disregard or disrespect either the Father or the Son. Why? Because eternal life is nothing more than intimate communion between the believer and the Father through the merits and mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ. So you cannot know one without knowing the other. And you cannot despise one without despising the other.

Eternal Life Through Christ's Righteousness

The first application is this: the knowledge of God and Christ leads to eternal life. This is the way in which Christ gives eternal life, by the knowledge of Him that has called us. And this is the way that we come to receive it. Look in your Bibles, 2 Peter 1, verse 3. There it is spelled out for you: “According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue.” How do we get eternal life? Through the knowledge of the one true and living God and Jesus Christ His Son. So eternal life is knowledge.

But it is more than an intellectual, more than historical knowledge; it is a personal, intimate relationship. I started out on this last week. I asked this question, and I am going to answer it in my application. Do you remember when that rich young ruler and that lawyer asked our Lord, “What must I do that I may inherit eternal life?” What was His answer? “Keep the commandments.” You will have to go back to last week's message to get my explanation

of why our Lord said that. Eternal life—is it to be had in keeping the commandments? The answer is yes and no. It is no: you cannot earn eternal life by keeping the commandments, because the commandments demand a personal, perfect, and perpetual obedience.

So if you became perfect today and never ever sinned again, and you kept the law of God personally, perfectly, and perpetually from here on out, what about all those sins you committed before you got perfect? It is impossible, then, for you to be saved by keeping the commandments. But is salvation through keeping the commandments? Yes, it is—through our Lord's keeping of the commandments.

Galatians 4:4 says, “But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.” Why did God send His Son to be made under the law? So that Jesus Christ might obey that law personally, perfectly, and perpetually for His people. Jesus Christ kept the law perfectly. In John 8:29 He said, “I do always those things that please him.” Would to God we could say it.

Now think this thing through. Let me ask you a question from the Bible, right here. Suppose all that Jesus Christ did for you was to die as your substitute and He did nothing else. Would that be enough to get you into the presence of God the Father? Don’t answer out loud. The answer is no.

You say, “What are you talking about?” Well, it might keep you out of hell. Because God is just and He would not demand payment twice. But in order to get into the presence of God, you need something more than forgiveness of sins. You need a perfect righteousness. And that’s what our Lord did when He kept the law. He earned. He merited. He worked out a perfect righteousness. He not only forgave us of our sins, He gave us His righteousness.

Look in your Bibles, 2 Corinthians 5:21. This is one of the most beautiful passages of the Bible. It is the doctrine of imputation. Look at it. 2 Corinthians 5 and verse 21. Here the Bible says, “For he”—that is, God the Father—“hath made him”—that is, God the

Son—"to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Did you hear that? "For he," God the Father, "made him," God the Son, "to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." So what did God do? God took our sin and imputed it to Jesus Christ. Then God took the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ and imputed it, or charged it in our account, and gave it to us. So now, in Christ, we are not only forgiven; we have an absolute, perfect righteousness. Our standing in the presence of the law is one of impeccable obedience.

Because Christ kept the law in every respect.

Do you possess eternal life? If you answer yes, it means that you possess and enjoy an intimate relationship with God the Father, the Lord Jesus Christ, and His perfect righteousness. You have eternal life now. Eternal life is communion with God. It is forever learning and knowing the one true and living God through His Son Jesus Christ and being conformed to His image.

Application: Enjoying Eternal Life Now

What do you get when you die? A perfect relationship, a perfect communion, a perfect intimacy with the one true and living God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

If you detest and despise communion with the Father now, you are not going to like the eternal state at all. If you think eternity has to do with golfing, beaching, swimming, and playing, you are mistaken. Eternal life in glory will be loving, serving, worshipping, adoring, and praising the one true and living God who redeemed us through Jesus Christ our Lord. What we have now in time and history is to be only a foretaste of what we are to have in glory.

What is eternal life? It is an enjoyment of God every day: worshipping Him, praising Him, serving Him, glorifying Him, living for Him, and participating in Him. If you do not have eternal life now, you will not get it when you die. Eternal life is what we enjoy now, but far more fully and completely in glory. As our Lord said, "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent."

One of our problems now is we forget. And the older you get, the more you forget. But if you ever stop and think about in glory, in eternity, you will have a perfect mind and a perfect memory. Everything that you learn about God, you will understand totally, completely, and perfectly, and you will never forget it. You will be forever, forever, forever learning about our great and glorious and sovereign majesty, and yet never, ever fully comprehending Him, because only God can comprehend God.

Thank God for Jesus Christ. Let us pray. Father, we thank You for Your love and Your mercy and Your grace to us. We thank Thee for the knowledge that You've given us of the one true and living God and of Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent. Give us grace, Lord, to serve Thee acceptably with reverence and godly fear, and may we enjoy Thee on a daily basis, commune with Thee, for Thou art our food, Thou art our drink. As we could not even possibly think of going days without food and drink, may we not even possibly think of going days or hours without being

May our lives be centered around the Lord Jesus Christ. May we forever be learning and bringing our lives in conformity to Your word and being made more holy and more godly on a daily basis. In Christ's name we ask. Amen.

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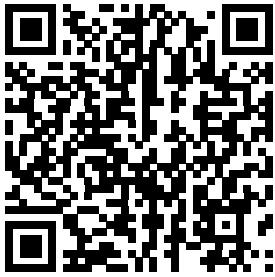
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