

ETERNAL LIFE

“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord.” —ROMANS 6:23

There are many things that could legitimately be described as gifts from God, but Paul tells us the gift of God is eternal life. There is much confusion as to what eternal life is, why we need it and how we receive it.

In the New Testament, eternal life is not something we receive when we die. It is spoken of in the present tense. John 3:36 says, “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life...” It does not say “will have” but “has” eternal life. Jesus said, “I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life...he has crossed over from death into life” (John 5:24). Eternal life is a present tense experience that is the result of being born again of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus later defines eternal life: “Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent” (John 17:3). It is knowing God and knowing Christ, not in an intellectual sense, but experientially. Eternal life is nothing less than the life of God lived within a person. It is that quality of life that derives from the presence of Jesus Christ in us, which now makes sense of this life on earth, but which we continue to enjoy through all eternity.

The reason we need eternal life is because the only other alternative is what the Bible calls “perishing”. 1 Corinthians 1:18 says, “For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing...” 2 Corinthians 4:3 says, “If our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing.” Every one of us is naturally in the process of perishing. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is about His intervention in a person’s life, halting the process of perishing and replacing it with eternal life. John 3:16 says, “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” Unless the process of perishing is replaced with the process of living an eternal life through Jesus Christ, perishing will culminate in eternal separation from God. There is no third path; perishing or living, which is why we need eternal life.

Receiving eternal life is a gift of God. The marvelous thing is there is nothing we have to do to earn it. Eternal life is never a reward and never payment for anything we do. It is a gift which simply requires coming humbly to Christ with empty hands, accepting it and saying, “Thank You, Lord.”

PRAYER: Thank You, heavenly Father, for the gift of eternal life. It brings me much comfort and peace knowing I will be in your presence forever.

TO REFLECT UPON: Do I realize eternal life has already begun for me in Christ?