

“Do You Know That You Have Eternal Life?”

1 John 5:9-13

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1 John 5:9-13 “If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater, for this is the testimony of God that he has borne concerning his Son. Whoever believes in the Son of God **has the testimony in himself**. Whoever does not believe God has made him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has borne concerning his Son. And this is the testimony that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life. **I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life.**”

In keeping with his increasing curiosity, a five-year-old boy named Mikey asked his father how he had come to be. His father, wishing that his wife had answered this question by now, replied, “God made you”. The youngster thought for a moment and replied, “I thought you and mom made me?”

His dad took *his* moment to think and then said, “Well, your mom and I participated in the process but God made you.” Mikey, appearing to think intently, took another moment and then said, “But I didn’t have anything to do with it, right?” His dad replied, “Right....but you do now.”

The Gospel of John is my favorite book in all the Bible. The letters of John are a close second. You’ve just got to love John. Jesus did. Scripture says that John was “**the disciple whom Jesus loved**”. He had such a heart for bringing others to Christ and introducing them to the heart of God. Toward the end of his gospel, he says that he wrote the many things he did “**so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.**” But here in his first letter John says, “**I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal live.**” John was an evangelist! He wanted people to come to Christ, to believe on Him. But he also wanted more for them.

I think the late Don Tabb had much in common with John. I’m quite sure they are famous friends by now.

When our family moved back to BR for the first time in 1982, I had been playing a lot of competitive handball. I asked a friend if he knew any handball players. He gave me several names. One of those names was Don Tabb. I called. We scheduled a game at the Wallbanger on Old Hammond Highway. I got there early to warm up. Don arrived a few minutes later. After introductions and before the first serve, Don looked me squarely in the eye and said, “Barry,

there is something I have to ask you before we play. Have you come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ?" I replied, "Yes, yes I have." Don beat me 3 out of 5 games.

That's not a question I'm asked often. Are you? The Apostle John essentially asks a similar question in the form of his declaration in verse 13. It is obvious isn't it? "Do you know that you have eternal life?"

Davin Travis directed Campus Crusade for Christ on the LSU campus for over 7 years. Last week we were talking about this passage and he said, "Barry, I've talked with hundreds, if not thousands of college students and asked them basically that same question. I can count on both hands the number who responded affirmatively and said 'yes'." Of course, Darin said that much faster than I did. But Darin would ask them: "If you were to die today are you certain that you would go to heaven?"Less than 10 in 7 years answered YES! It is essentially the same question that the Apostle John poses but in an affirmative statement, "that you may know that you have eternal life."

Do you? Do you know that you have eternal life?

It is such an important question, isn't it? It is the most important question you will ever answer.

I've heard many testimonies of faith in Christ. I once prayed with a man who was in his late fifties. He asked Christ to be his personal Savior and Lord. He said that he had a yearning for years and just wasn't able to articulate what it was. He had come to realize that he needed a Savior.

I've heard many of your testimonies and accounts of coming to faith. Some of you have very personal and moving testimonies of how the Holy Spirit radically changed your life when you prayed to receive Christ. Others of you share about a time in your life when something cataclysmic occurred that caused you to turn to Christ as a last resort.

Still others of you may have had the experience that I had. You grew up in a Christian home. Many have told me that they cannot remember a time when they did not believe in Jesus. If you are in that group, your testimony may be like this description in a book entitled Preparing Your Child to Love God by Anna B. Mow:

"When a child has been reared in a Christian home and in a Christian church, when the temple of his mind and heart has with deep reverence been prepared for holy occupancy; the time has come when he will inevitably have his own personal encounter with the Lord of Life. This encounter will not be with a stranger, for he has already learned to love Him. It will not be an encounter like a prodigal adult would have that would involve a complete change of direction

and pattern of life; but it will involve just as definite a decision and just as definite a commitment to the Savior.”

These are all very real accounts of believing in Christ and trusting Him as Savior and Lord. Each is Biblical. Each is authentic. Each is effective. They are all in keeping with Scripture. And they are all very personal.

We all know John 3:16. **“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”** Believing in Christ. Eternal life.

When the angel of the Lord appeared and shook the prison holding Paul and Silas, the prison guard feared for his life that they might escape. But they said to him, **“Stop! Do not harm yourself! We are all here.”** And Scripture tells us that the guard knelt down and asked them, **“What must I do to be saved?”** And they said to him, **“Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved, you and your household.”**

When Lazarus had died and Martha said to Jesus, **“...if you had been here my brother would not have died.”** Jesus said to her, **“I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die.”** **John 11:25**

Paul tells us in his letter to the Romans **“...the one who believes in him will never be put to shame.”** **Romans 9:33**

Last week, Darin showed us that in chapter four of this letter, John tell us that If **“anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in them and they in God.”**

1 John 4:15

Whoever is confronted with the person of Jesus Christ, everyone, no exceptions, must make a decision. And in that decision lies their destiny. At the heart of the gospel is a choice. **“Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved...”**

John says, **“I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life.”**

Do you know?

I am not asking if you are perfect and sinless. Scripture says that if we say we have no sin we are liars. It says that if we confess our sin He is faithful to forgive us. John told us that in Chapter 1 of this letter.

I am not asking if you think you deserve to have eternal life. You don't, none of us do. We are all guilty before our Holy God. Jesus took our guilt and shame to the cross. If you are in Christ, you have been declared 'not guilty'!

I'm not asking if you think your faith is strong enough to ultimately save you. Jesus said that faith the size of a mustard seed can do the impossible.

I'm not even asking if you can remember a day when God did His work in you. We already know that many say that they cannot remember a day when they did not believe.

What matters is that you have believed on Jesus Christ and trusted Him for the forgiveness of sin. But what also matters is that you may know, for certain, that you have eternal life.

A point of clarification: I'm not suggesting that if you are a follower of Christ you never have feelings of doubt. Doubting is part of faith. But doubting does not change reality. No amount of guilt will change your past and no amount of worry will change your future. And, if Christ is your personal savior, no amount of doubt will change the reality of your eternal life in Him regardless of how you feel.

Even so, this question remains for each of us to answer individually for ourselves. "Do you know that **you** have eternal life?"

This brings me to a second question for this morning. How we answer this second question has a great deal to do with how we will answer the first. Put another way, your understanding of the answer to this second question has a direct correlation to the confidence you have in answering the first.

The second question is this: "**Do you know how God saved you? Do you know HOW God saved you?**"

I'm not looking for an answer that speaks to God's unconditional love for us. Nor am I looking for Christ's atoning sacrifice and the imputation of Christ's righteousness on our behalf. I'm not talking about Christ's resurrection and ascension. All of that is absolutely necessary to make salvation possible. But I'm looking for the answer to the question of how God saved you-individually-personally-particularly.....you!

This is really an important question. Because the first question has to do with who is ultimately responsible for your salvation because ultimately that has to do with how confident you can be that you have eternal life.

There are three passages of Scripture that give great clarity in answering this second question, "Do you know how God saved you?"

First, let's look at the letter of Paul to the Ephesians, chapter 2:

Paul describes us before we were saved:

Ephesians 2:1-9 "And you were dead in the trespasses and sins ² in which you once walked, following the course of this world....⁴ But^[c] God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ..."

Our condition prior to salvation is described as dead, the absence of life. Dead people cannot respond to spiritual things. Corpses do not walk in faith. Dead people do not seek after the living God. The Book of Romans tells us that apart from Christ “no one seeks after God, they cannot”. We are unable to discern spiritual things because we are spiritually dead...we do not understand Godly things because we are in an ungodly death. Dead people do not have the capacity to even consider a Triune God that so loved us that He gave His only Son to save us. The desire for that is not within us. It is not possible. We were dead in our sin.

However in **Colossians 2:13** Paul says that “And you, who were dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, **God made alive** together with Him, having forgiven us all our trespasses.” **If you are alive in Christ and he is your personal Savior, then it was God who made you alive and raised you from the dead.**

Second, let's look at John's gospel, chapter 1:

John 1:1-5, 10-14 “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God.....the word became flesh and dwelt among us...to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, ¹³ **who were born**, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but **of God.**”

There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus. He came to Jesus at night. Do you know what Jesus said to him? “Truly, truly I say to you that you must be born again or you cannot see the kingdom of God.....what is born of the flesh is flesh (the natural man) but what is born of the Spirit is spirit...you must be born again.”

Nicodemus protested saying that it was impossible to enter again his mother's womb. Nicodemus was right. There was no way for him to enter again into his mother's womb. But Jesus meant spiritual birth, he meant new life, he meant eternal life. Paul speaks in **Romans 6** about walking in the “newness of life”. Peter says in his first letter, chapter 1, **1:3** “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. According to His great mercy, **he has caused us to be born again** to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”

John says to us in this letter at the beginning of chapter 5, “Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of Him.”

One who has eternal life, one who is spiritually alive, one who is in Christ Jesus is born not of blood nor of the will of the flesh or **the will of man**, but of the will of God. **Born of God.**

The third passage is from Paul's second letter to the church at Corinth.

2 Corinthians 5:17 “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a **new creation**. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.”

This is about as basic as it gets. We can certainly all understand this. The first book of our Bible, Genesis, begins this way, **“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth...”** The Latin for the word ‘created’ is ex nihilo, it means to bring something into being from nothing. In our context it means God spoke your life in Christ into being. It means God created faith in you. He created ex nihilo. It was faith that was not there before.....saving faith, your saving faith, your very own saving faith that God created in you. **Ephesians 2:10** says, **“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus.....”**

So let’s recap where we are in answering our second question for the morning, **“Do you know how God saved you?”** I want to do this by asking three additional questions:

1. Are you able to raise yourself from the dead?
2. Are you able to birth yourself?
3. Are you able to create yourself out of nothing?

The answers to each of these is, of course, No!

1. God raised you from the dead.
2. You were born of God, he birthed you.
3. God created you and created in you saving faith.

Ephesians 2:8-9 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; **it is the gift of God**, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”

Romans 9: **“...it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy.”**

And because it was God who saved you, since it was God who gave you life in Christ Jesus, it is God who assures you that you do indeed have eternal life and that you can know it and claim it for yourself. This is why Jesus says to us,

John 10:28-29 **“I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand.”**

That is why Paul says to us in Philippians 1:6 **“And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.”**

That is why Paul could say, “who shall separate us from the love of Christ?...For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus or Lord.”

Anything else in all creation includes you. That is why Jesus said no one can snatch you out of His hand or the Father’s hand.

He began the good work in you. He will bring it to completion. He holds you in His hand. Knowing that God saved you, means that you didn’t save yourself. Knowing that **‘he that began**

a good work in you will continue it', is to know that your eternal security depends on God who is faithful. Your eternal security does not depend on you. Knowing that your eternal life did not and does not depend on you, means that you can forget trying to earn or even keep your salvation. You can now live a life of gratitude and obedience in your walk of faith. The freedom in this is great beyond measure. That is what this first letter of John is all about: loving others as Christ loves you, obeying Christ as one of His children, living as Christ because you are a child of the creator God of the universe who gave you life. In Christ we are free to live in gratitude, participating and cooperating with the Holy Spirit in our sanctification, in becoming like Christ.

The mystery of it all is that when we are re-created, born again, raised from the dead, we are given eyes to see what we could not see before, and ears to hear what we could not hear before. We are made spiritually alive. God took our dead heart of stone and gave us a heart of flesh. We come to know our need for a Savior. We hear the voice of our Great Shepherd. Jesus said, "My sheep hear my voice and they follow me." We respond to His call. We make our own decision to ask for forgiveness and for Christ to be our Savior and Lord. We had nothing to do with our new life in Christ but now we have everything to do with the eternal life we've been given, including that first step in faith of believing on Jesus Christ.

This is all very, very personal but it is transcendent. Because eternal life in Christ is not a feeling and it is not an emotion and it is not a theologically correct set of affirmations or creeds or beliefs. Life in Christ is a relationship.

The night before Jesus was crucified, he prayed to His Father in Heaven and said, "...glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you since you have Him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. And this is eternal life that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent."

Eternal life is not some ethereal, spiritual eternity. It is a personal relationship with the living God and with Jesus Christ, His Son whom he sent. That's why Don Tabb asked if I had come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Eternal life is knowing Christ. It is being in relationship with God the Father and God the Son, a personal relationship with the one who created you. That is what Mikey's dad was telling him. "Mikey, remember who you are! You are God's child. Walk like it. Live like it. Don't keep doing things that separate you from your Father. Love others, particularly your brothers and sisters as God has loved you."

Life in Christ is not a feeling and it is not an emotion. Life in Christ is a relationship and the depth and intimacy of that relationship with Christ is a choice, a daily choice, just as in any relationship; it requires commitment and time and communication.

If you have come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, your destiny is assured. You have eternal life because that was God's doing. You have eternal life because you are in a

relationship with Jesus and Jesus said, "...I am with you always." He said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." Jesus is faithful.

2 Timothy 1:12 "...I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that day what has been entrusted to me."

Amen!