

INTRODUCTION

Nothing seems to last forever. If you live longer enough you would agree that consumer products are not as durable as they used to be. The fact that things gradually fall apart provides employment opportunity for the service and repair sector. However, people later figure that rather than spending money to fix something you may as well go buy new ones because it may be cheaper that way. To add to that equation is the unlimited human desire to chase after newer and better things. I once watched a TV commercial of a department store in which the actors deliberately broke their stuff so that they have an excuse to shop for replacement. For some other people they still prefer to keep using what they have and hope that they can last forever. But how long is forever? We live in the confines of time and space. It is hard for us to fully comprehend eternity. The Bible says that a person has eternal life when he accepts Christ. How does eternal life look like? This picture on the screen illustrate how some people understand eternal life. Before we knew Christ we were sinners. These people think that eternal life begins after they depart from this world when we finally become saints. For the duration between those two points in time they live for themselves. People who hold this view believe that we have to take care of our needs and solve our problems single-handedly. They do not expect God to bother them with any demand either. Believing in Christ is just a way for them to obtain a visa to go to heaven. Their motto can be summarized as “Thank God for saving me. See you again in heaven!” However, that is not how the Bible describes eternal life. Eternal life in Christ concerns about this life on earth as much as our future life in glory. Let us explore a few aspects about eternal life in this message.

EXPLANATION

1. 转变 Transition

First of all, receiving eternal life is a revolutionary transition. Jesus says in [John 5:24](#) that: “I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.” Jesus points out the transition every person went through from a seeker to a believer. First he heard the gospel, perhaps a Christian shared Bible truth with him, or he read a gospel track or some Bible verses. Based on what he heard he believed in Jesus. Jesus said at that point this person went through a transition from death to life. A very familiar verse even to non-believers in [John 3:16](#) reads: “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.” Jesus says whoever believes in Him has, not will have, eternal life. Therefore, based on these two verses when does eternal life begin? It begins the moment when a person committed his life to Christ. This famous Bible verse in [John 3:16](#) appears in the story when Jesus discussed with a Jewish religious leader named Nicodemus about how a person can have eternal life. Jesus says to Nicodemus in [verse 3](#): “I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.” Jesus uses the phrase “see the kingdom of God” as a synonym for eternal life. He says a person can only receive eternal life if he is “born again.” This word “again” in Greek can also mean “from above.” Putting everything we just read together, Jesus

meant that eternal life is something given by God from above the moment when a person opens his heart and receives Christ.

When we say that receiving eternal life is a transition there has to be some obvious changes in a person after he received Christ. Before anyone notices the outward changes there would be some inward changes. Listen to the testimony of a sister who was baptized in our church a few years ago. "After I became a Christian there was a tremendous change in my value system. In the past, my dream was to attend a famous college and earn a lot of money. With money and reputation I thought I would be a blessed person. However, anxiety and pride overwhelmed me when I tried to compare myself with other people. I strived to chase after my goals at the expense of sacrificing my health. I might look strong on the outside but it was deeply bruised on the inside. When I was by myself I felt hopeless and fear about the future arrested me. After I became a Christian I realized that God was always there caring for me. Finally, I came home! God is with me no matter what I go through. When I am weak He strengthens me with His Word. He gives me faith, strength, peace and joy." Do you recognize similar changes in you after you received eternal life? In the past we lived for ourselves. We thought that spiritual matters are superstition and are a waste of time. After we became a Christian we love the people around us, we share what we have with the needy, we offer money to support ministries, and we love to spend time reading the Bible and attending church meetings. The transition from spiritually dead to receiving eternal life flows out from the inside to our behavior on the outside. It is all the work of God.

2. 地位 Position

Eternal life in Christ concerns about this life on earth as much as our future life in glory. Eternal life begins when a person accepts Christ into his heart. In his spirit he goes through a transition from death to life. Eternal life is not only a transition, it is also a change in position. Paul says in **Romans 8:15** this way: For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." By granting us eternal life our Heavenly Father is making us His children. We may not think that is too big of a deal to call another person father. We can easily accept another person as godfather if we can gain something from him. However, to a Jew God is so sacred that no one dares not to address Him by name as Jehovah. But Paul tells us that when we are saved by Christ we are adopted as children to the Father. Eternal life results in a change in our position with God. He does not see us as sinners anymore. Instead, He treats us as His own children. Once our eternal life has begun God desires us to continue to grow in a relationship with Him. Paul testifies his life pursuit in **Philippians 3:7-8** when he says: 7 But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. 8 What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ. Paul was a scholar and expert in religion in his day. Before he was saved he zealously persecuted Christians. After Paul became a Christian he realized that all that he tried to hold onto – his intellectual knowledge, his background, recognition in the society, etc. were of no value comparing to knowing Christ.

Eternal life should be a matter of continue to build up our relationship with God. However, to some Christians receiving salvation is like marrying a lady of one's dream. Some guys may say

“This girl has become my wife. Why bother to further develop our relationship?” Many of you may have heard of a story when a wife complained to a marriage counselor that her husband did not say “I love you” to her anymore. The husband explained: “I have told her that I loved her at our marriage ceremony. If I change my mind I will inform her.” Brothers and sisters, whether you have been a Christian for one year or ten years, are you actively growing in your relationship with God? A relationship needs time and effort to cultivate. Brothers and sisters, after you are saved do you have a continuous desire to know God? I have been a Christian long enough to say that I do not worry about people not accepting Christ. Rather, I am not worry about Christians stop growing spiritually. Some believers are not reading the Bible any more, no longer coming to church meetings weekly, or stop serving diligently in the church. Let us encourage each other in our spiritual grow. What God requires of us can be summarized in a short hymn titled “Day by Day” we have been singing in recent weeks - Day by day, dear Lord, of You three things I pray. To see You more clearly, to love You more dearly, to follow You more nearly, day by day. May these three things be the life pursuit of all of us.

3. 抉择 Decision

Eternal life in Christ concerns about this life on earth as much as our future life in glory. We said that eternal life is a transition. Once a person accepted Christ as his Savior and Lord his eternal life in Christ has begun. Eternal life is also a change in position where a person became a child of the Heavenly Father. A healthy relationship is one that continues to grow. A person who has eternal life in Christ is reflected by how he makes his life decisions. Let us look at a few categories.

A. 在主里的身份 Identity in Christ

The first thing I would like for us to consider is our new identity in Christ. The fact that God gives us eternal life takes away our pride. It is all God’s grace. He does not see anything inside us that is good enough to qualify for salvation. But at the same time God sees us as precious. Paul says in **Romans 8:32** that - He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all - how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? God cherishes us so much that He was willing to send Jesus Christ to die on the cross to redeem us. The redemption through Christ confers us great worth. **1 Peter 2:9** states that: But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. By redeeming us, God separates us from all nations and grants us a distinguished status as the people of God. I still remember in the first semester of my seminary study I was quite nervous about my adjustment in school. I knew that I was not young anymore. After leaving school for seven years and now I switched to a different major I worried about my grades. In one course I took, though I have forgotten most of the things I learned I still remember one thing the professor said. He reminded us that our identity is in Christ, not in our grades. I understand that it is a competitive world out there. People may evaluate you based on your GPA, IQ, performance, sales record, appearance, clothes you wear, income and many other criteria. But as Christians, all those factors are secondary compared to the fact that you are a child of God. Brother and sisters, next time you look at yourself in the mirror you have to make a decision whether to use the criteria of this world to see yourself, or look at yourself through God’s eyes.

B. 向主忠诚交帐 Accountability to the Master

Since our identity is in Christ in whatever we do we should be accountable to our Master. The Bible tells us that eventually God would evaluate us based on how we live out our eternal life. Paul says in **1 Corinthians 3:12-15** that: 12 If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, 13 his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. 14 If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. 15 If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames. The Bible never reveals what reward God has in store for us. But it clearly tells us that we will receive different rewards based on our faithfulness, rather than on our accomplishment. Many of you may remember the parable of the talents Jesus told. A master entrusted different amount of money to three servants. The first two servants worked diligently and made 100 % profit for their master. They received the same compliment from the master. The exact wordings are used in **Matthew 25:21 and 23** – “His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!’” Note that the master highlighted the faithfulness of each of the two servant twice in his comment. In comparison, the third servant was rebuked because he was unfaithfulness to the resources the master gave him. He was too lazy to even try investing the money the master entrusted him. In this world people are evaluated based on their achievement – how many tasks one can complete with success or how much money one can gather, in the shortest time. Not so with our God. Every talent and opportunity is from Him. Ultimately, we will be evaluated by how faithful we are in using the resources He has put in our hands.

C. 靠主渡过困难 Difficulty in Life

When we strive to live out our eternal life for God we may still face difficulties in life. Whether you are a Christian or a non-believer we have to deal with them. The difference is what kind of mindset we have when dealing with our difficulties. Christians should understand that it is God who is helping us solve our difficulties through the means He provides for us. **1 Peter 5:7** reads - Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. Christians have an eternal relationship with a loving Father. Not only that He cares about our circumstances, He has the mighty power to fulfill our needs. He knows our weaknesses, and He is willing to strengthen us. Paul says in **Philippians 4:6-7** that we can cast our anxiety to the Lord through prayer: 6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. God knows that very often what bothers us is not the problem itself. It is the restlessness inside of us that is torturing us. But God promises to give us peace when we lift our problems up to Him in prayer. This peace is more than just a naive thought when we say to ourselves: “No big deal. I can get through this.” To Christians it is a deep conviction that since it is God who puts us in the unique situation He will continue to see us through. He is in control of everything to accomplish His plan in us. Jesus describes this kind of peace to His disciples in **John 14:27** - Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. Jesus made that statement over the Last Supper. He knew that he would be arrested, convicted and nailed to

the cross. If there was anyone at the dinner table that needed peace it is the Lord Himself. But He took initiative to comfort His disciples. When we rely on Him we can have perfect peace even when we are still in a storm.

CONCLUSION

Eternal life in Christ concerns about this life on earth as much as our future life in glory. Once we are in Christ God will continue to watch over us in every step of our life, until the day we see Him in glory. Once our eternal life begins from now on we should live for God. When I was preparing this message my wife played a song that she intended to teach in the children Sunday school from her computer. I believe it is a good summary to what we studied today.

A Gift to You
Betsy Hernandez

Everything I am
Everything I'll be
I give it to you, Lord
And do it thankfully

Every song I sing
Every praise I bring
Everything I do is a gift to You

Everything I have
All You've given to me
I give it to you, Lord
And do it thankfully

Every song I sing
Every praise I bring
Everything I do is a gift to You