

ETERNAL LIFE

By A. J. POLLOCK

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LIFE, whether natural or spiritual, is a difficult subject to consider. It is acknowledged that the most complex of all the sections of the British Association is the biological — that is, the section that has to do with life. Take the subject of natural life, the only life the British Association discusses, there is a great deal of knowledge, on the human side, of how it starts, of its characteristics, of how it ends, but the most learned person in the world cannot tell us **what life in itself really is**. That is a secret known only to God, a secret no human person will ever be able to penetrate. And this can be more emphatically stated of spiritual life, than of natural.

Attempts from time to time have been made to discover the secret of natural life. For instance, very extensive experiments were made to ascertain if it could come of its own accord, to see if it could come spontaneously. These experiments have proved beyond a doubt that

LIFE CAN ONLY COME FROM PRE-EXISTING LIFE,

that spontaneous generation of life, as it was called, can never be.

This theory of spontaneous generation of life received its death-blow at the hands of that eminent biologist, the discoverer of bacteria, the late Louis Pasteur. His experiments proved conclusively, that if due care was taken to exclude pre-existing life, and to prevent the introduction of fresh life, the result would be purely negative, that is, no life would manifest itself.

That celebrated scientist, the late Lord Kelvin, declared,

“ I am ready to accept as an article of faith for all time, and in all space, **that life is produced by life and ONLY by life.**”

There is no doubt that some scientists were most anxious to prove the theory of spontaneous generation of life. If the experiments had succeeded, supporting their point of view, the discovery doubtless would have been hailed with a wild chorus of impious delight, sweeping over an unbelieving world. God would have been no longer a necessity ; and politely, or impolitely, would have been bowed out of His own universe.

Let this digression as to natural life serve its purpose to illustrate that spiritual life, so far as the believer on the Lord Jesus Christ is concerned, is subject to the same condition as natural life is: it can only come from spiritual life.

Seeing the believer is the possessor of eternal life as the gift of God, and that life can only come from life, the question of all importance arises, What is its source? Whence does it originate?

Man is but the creature of an hour. He is here to-day, and gone to-morrow. His days are “ swifter than a weaver’s shuttle.” (Job. 7: 6). The only stable thing that man knows is the creation around him — the earth beneath his feet ; the sun, moon and stars above his head. We may well ask, How did all these wonders come into existence? There are millions of suns in the heavens, the nearest said to be only twenty million million miles distant from this planet ; whilst the distances of the most remote stars are incalculable. What mighty power created them? What mighty arm has poised them in space? What unerring wisdom controls their move-

ments? We stand spell-bound, speechless, before such an amazing spectacle.

Most evidently creation demands a Creator, and Scripture plainly tells us what the great lesson of creation is. We read,

“ The invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His [God’s] ETERNAL POWER AND GODHEAD.” (Rom. 1: 20).

Take this little earth of ours, a mere speck compared to untold numbers of mighty suns in the heavens. Our earth turns round on its axis every twenty-four hours. It travels round the sun on its orbit every twelve months. Scientists tell us it is travelling with the sun into space at the rate of eighteen miles every second, no one knows where. Who could arrange all this but an almighty Being, One utterly beyond our feeble comprehension?

Where then did God come from? Was there a time when He did not exist? Did He come from nowhere, from vacuum, from nothing? These questions scarcely need an answer in the face of the great lesson of creation. We cannot conceive of a time when there was nothing. We cannot conjure up the idea of a vacuum. Creation with its million mouths loudly proclaims the Creator’s **“ eternal power and Godhead.”**

It was told that an infidel communist in Russia was boasting that every trace of God was removed from the land, when his companion pointed to the stars, and said, “ You have not removed those yet.” The greatest word that can pass human lips is GOD. God alone

“ hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto ; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power EVERLASTING. Amen.” (1 Tim. 6: 15).

Here we have the Source of everything, of life natural and life spiritual. The two words — eternal life — proclaim this great fundamental fact. Take these two words as they stand in our English Bibles:

ETERNAL*, that which never had a beginning, and can never have an end ;

LIFE, conscious existence, power to think, to will, to feel, to love.

The only conclusion we can come to, and that in the light the sacred page sheds on the subject, is that

ETERNAL LIFE IN ITS ESSENCE IS THE LIFE OF GOD.

Here we get the great Fount and Source of life.

The testimony of creation, majestic and passing wonderful as it is, does not, however, reveal God's **heart** to us. It reveals His **fingers**, for the Psalmist David, contemplating the night sky, exclaimed,

“ When I consider the heavens, THE WORK OF THY FINGERS, the moon and the stars, which Thou hast ordained ; what is man, that Thou art mindful of him.” (Psalm. 8: 3, 4).

Creation reveals God's almighty power and wisdom, but man needs an Object for his affections, and above all

* The question is often asked, What is the difference in the meaning of the two words, **eternal** and **everlasting**? The answer is, There is no difference. The Greek word of the New Testament, **aiōnios**, is sometimes translated **everlasting** and sometimes **eternal**. A little thought will make it evident that **everlasting**, when used in its **absolute** sense, as here, must stretch equally backwards and forwards, and so with the word **eternal**. When it is a question of blessings **conferred**, the word **eternal**, can only look forward. See 2 Cor. 5: 1 ; Heb. 5: 9 ; 9: 12, etc. The context makes this plain.

a Being, whom He can worship. We shall now see how this need is met.

It is just here that we take an immense step forward in our enquiry. It has pleased God to reveal Himself in infinite love in sending into this world His only begotten Son. Scripture leaves us in no doubt as to who the Lord Jesus Christ is. Scripture plainly predicates both His Deity and His Manhood. We read,

“ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, AND THE WORD WAS GOD . . . All things were made by Him.” (John 1: 1-3).

Here the Deity of our Lord is stated as distinct from that of the Father and the Spirit, yet one God.

“ AND THE WORD WAS MADE FLESH, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.” (John 1: 14).

Here we get the Manhood of our Lord emphatically stated.

Could anything be more wonderful than that the Son of God, the Eternal Word, should become incarnate, should come into this world to make a God of love known. Man's sin involved the atoning death of our Lord on the cross of Calvary. Was there ever such a gesture of love shown as was seen at the cross? God's righteousness was there upheld, even to the outpouring of His unsparing judgment of sin upon the spotless Sinbearer, when He who knew no sin was made sin for us, that we might be the righteousness of God in Christ. (2 Cor. 5: 21). It was there that God's love shone in all its splendour. The greatest event that ever happened in this world was the entrance into it of the Man, Christ Jesus. He was “ God . . . manifest in the flesh ” (1 Tim. 3: 16), “ Christ . . .

who is over all, God blessed for ever." (Rom. 9: 5). In Him the full revelation of God was made. We read,

"No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, HE HATH DECLARED HIM." (John 1: 18).

The reader may ask, But how does this throw light on the subject of eternal life? We would reply that we are seeking to go step by step, clearing the ground as we go. Here then is a Scripture clearly showing the connection between what we have been considering and the subject of eternal life.

"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (for the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that ETERNAL LIFE, WHICH WAS WITH THE FATHER, AND WAS MANIFESTED UNTO US)." (1 John 1: 1, 2).

Here we have clearly identified "the Word of life," and "that Eternal Life" in one and the same Person, even our Lord Jesus Christ. Moreover the eternal Sonship of our Lord is plainly implied in that the Eternal Life was WITH THE FATHER. It is clear that where there is the Father, referring to God, as it does in the Scriptures, there is also the Son, for there cannot be the Father without the Son.

"Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father." (1 John 2: 23).

Thus we see how eternal life in its source is seen in our blessed Lord, first with the Father in past eternal ages, and then in time manifested to men.

The manifestation of eternal life shone forth in incomparable splendour when our Lord accompanied with His chosen disciples during the three-and-a-half years of His

public ministry in the land of Israel. But here we do well to raise the question, Why was the manifestation of eternal life necessary? Why does man need eternal life? The answer is that man is a sinner, **and his natural life is forfeited.** Hence the necessity for life — eternal life — a life not subject to death. In order that God's righteousness should be upheld, and God's love flow to sinful men, the atoning death of our Lord on the cross was an absolute necessity.

Not only did our Lord come into the world to make God known as Father, but He must needs meet man's sinful condition, or else that manifestation would be unavailing. So we read,

" In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might LIVE through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the PROPITIATION for our sins." (1 John 4: 9, 10).

Here are two grand results — LIFE AND PROPITIATION — flowing from the atoning death of our Lord.

One by itself would not suffice. To have our sins forgiven, and nothing more would be an intolerable condition, for the carnal mind is enmity against God. (Rom. 8: 7). To have life and a new nature without the forgiveness of sins would be equally an intolerable condition. We need both — LIFE AND PROPITIATION — if we are to be happy in the presence of God.

The word, **propitiation** (Greek, **hilasmos**), is akin to mercy seat (Greek, **hilasterion**), the place of propitiation in Hebrews 9: 5. This beautiful Old Testament type may well illustrate for us the grand truth of atonement. On the great Day of Atonement the High Priest went into the holiest of all, carrying the blood of the sin offering,

which he sprinkled once on the mercy seat and seven times before it. The holiest of all contained the Ark, made of two materials — **shittim wood**, setting forth the Manhood of our Lord; and **pure gold**, setting forth His Deity. On the top of the Ark rested a slab of **pure gold**, setting forth Divine righteousness. This was stained by the blood of the sin offering.

The slab of pure gold set forth God's immutable demand for righteousness to be upheld at all costs. God would not be God, if it were not so. The blood sprinkled upon the slab of pure gold in figure was the full and perfect answer to this demand.

Does not this beautiful type help us to understand the wonder of the antitype? Our Lord being the eternal Son of God, becoming in grace a true Man down here, accepting the body prepared for Him, laying down His precious life in sacrifice for sin, bearing to the full the judgment sin deserved, is it any wonder that His precious blood "cleanseth from all sin"? (1 John 1: 7). This the blood of bulls and goats could never do. They were simply types pointing on to the grand Antitype, to the one effectual, eternal sacrifice for sin. So through the atoning death of our Lord the throne of inflexible righteousness, of God's holiness, becomes a mercy seat, where God can meet and bless the vilest sinner, who repents and believes on the Lord Jesus Christ. Surely here in this we see that

"Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other." (Psalm 85: 10).

Not only did our Lord meet man's **guilt** on the cross of Calvary, He likewise dealt with his **state**. We have therefore to ask a question as to where sin comes from? This is plainly from a **sinful nature**. And just as thistles can only produce thistles, however cultivated, so a sinful nature can only produce sin. That sinful nature, "the

carnal mind," (Rom. 8: 7) is enmity against God, and cannot please Him. This was seen pre-eminently in that when our Lord came into this world, testifying of God's goodness, grace and mercy, the flesh rose up in bitter hatred, and crucified the Lord of glory. And this was not merely the act of an ignorant rabble, or of the common crowd. It was the High Priests and religious leaders of the nation, who were foremost in the terrible cry, Crucify Him, crucify Him.

How then, we ask, can man be happy in the presence of God? Only by the impartation of a **new nature**, a nature suitable to God, and finding its pleasure in the presence of God. We have already seen that the cross of Christ brings two things — propitiation and life — to the believer. Our Lord said to Nicodemus, a ruler among the Jews, a minister of the synagogue,

"Ye must be born again." (John 3: 7).

A word surely for us all. It was said of George Whitefield that he preached on this text a thousand times on both sides of the Atlantic, and when asked why he preached, "Ye must be born again," answered, "Because ye **must** be born again."

But if the evil nature is condemned by God at the cross, and set aside by Him, a new nature is then necessary for the believer. We read,

"For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, CONDEMNED SIN IN THE FLESH." (Rom. 8: 3).

Sin thus being dealt with, the way is opened out for God **righteously** to give the gift of eternal life to all, who believe on His only begotten Son. Seeing that not only are sins atoned for, but the sinful nature from which the

sins arise, is condemned and set aside, it behoves believers to judge the flesh. So we read what we are to do:

“Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth: fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry.” (Col. 3: 5).

Christianity is surely practical. This we learn in baptism, where we are baptised unto the death of Christ, and are exhorted to walk in newness of life.” (Rom. 6: 4).

We now come directly to the consideration of eternal life as the possession of all, who repent and trust in the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. The Gospel of John again and again proclaims eternal life as the possession of the believer. Take two well-known verses:

“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but HAVE everlasting life.” (John 3: 16).

This is perhaps the best known verse in the Bible. Untold thousands have been blessed by it. Martin Luther called it, The Miniature Bible. And now here are the very words of our blessed Lord,

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, HATH EVERLASTING LIFE, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.” (John 5: 24).

Could there be anything grander, or simpler, or more profound, than these Scriptures?

ETERNAL LIFE IS THE PRESENT POSSESSION OF THE BELIEVER

To understand the connection between Eternal Life

as the **Source***, and eternal life as the **gift** bestowed on the believer of the Lord Jesus, we venture to give an illustration.

When a tram reaches its terminus and has to return, it is necessary for the conductor to remove the wheel that contacts the live wire, and reverse its position, so that the return journey may be made. How careful is the conductor to make actual contact with the live wire. The wheel may be the fraction of an inch clear of the live wire, and nothing will happen. If it makes no contact, it might as well be a thousand miles away.

But look, contact is made. We know this at once, for if it is night time, the tram immediately lights up, and the electric current enters the machinery of the car, giving power for the return journey. But where does the power come from? The answer is, there is a mighty power station, it may be miles away, and the electric current flows along the live wire hung on standards along the whole route the tram must take. But see, the power station is giving light and power, not only to one tram-car, but to hundreds, illuminating the houses of a wide district, setting machinery into motion in hundreds of factories, covering an extensive area of territory, and serving a wide district.

Does the reader not catch at once the point of the illustration? The Lord bestows the gift of eternal life, not only upon a single believer, but also on millions of believers in every part of the world, in every nation, in every station of life, wherever men and women are found believing on the Lord Jesus Christ. It is clear that the

* The reader will notice that when Eternal Life refers to the Son of God as the Source of Life, the first letters of the two words are put in capitals, as referring to a Divine Person. When eternal life is referred to as the **gift** of God, and the possession of the believer, the words are printed in ordinary type throughout.

bestowing of eternal life does not lift the believer to the level of Deity, any more than the electric fluid entering the tramcar, giving it power of movement, made it the power station.

The power station is the **source** of electric power; the tramcars, houses, factories, the **recipients** of that power. So the Lord is the Source of eternal life, is Himself the Eternal Life, whilst believers are the **recipients** of this priceless gift, won for them by the atoning sorrows of Calvary.

Here is another question that often arises. The Gospel of John emphasises very happily that the believer is the possessor of eternal life, whilst in the first epistle of John we read that we have this life in God's Son. We read,

" And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, **and this life is IN HIS SON.**" (1 John 5: 11).

Is there a contradiction here? The Gospel says the believer has eternal life; the epistle says that he has it **in Christ**. We may be sure that Scripture does not contradict itself. Inspiration, the fact that the Scriptures are God-breathed, leaves us in no doubt of this.

May we be allowed to give an illustration from nature, which has helped the writer for many years. Our Lord often used nature to illustrate His theme. The Apostle Paul asked the question, " Doth not even nature itself teach you?" (1 Cor. 11: 14).

Suppose in spring time we take a fresh green leaf between our finger and thumb, taking care not to separate it from the tree. Its beautiful greenness, the delicate tracery of veins clearly marked on it, all declare that the leaf is the possessor of life. But mark! it does not possess

life **in itself**. It has not life independent of the tree. With one breath we might declare that the leaf is the possessor of life. With another breath we might declare that the life of the leaf is in the tree, and both remarks would be correct.

If the leaf had life in itself, then we could detach it from the tree, and it would continue fresh and green. But we know that would not be the case. The leaf has not independent life; its life is in the tree. Detached from the tree it would wither and die.

So believers are the possessors of eternal life, but not independent of the great Source of that life, even our Lord Jesus Christ. Instead of weakening the truth that the believer is the possessor of eternal life, the truth, that we have it in God's Son, only strengthens and confirms immeasurably this knowledge. Believers are told,

“Your life is hid with Christ in God.” (Col. 3: 3).

There is safety for you. What thief can break through and steal? What atomic bomb can shatter that security?

In regard to our illustration it is true that when autumn comes, and the sap in the trees ceases to be sent to its furthest limits, the leaves will put on their autumn tints, only to drop off the tree, withered, brown, and dead. The leaves die because the source of their life is withheld from them. But this cannot be so in the case of our blessed Lord, the Source of eternal life in connection with the believer. He sustains life. He fails not. Life eternal flows to the believer without cessation or break. The fact that our life is in God's Son confirms the believer more than ever that he is the possessor of eternal life.

What further light have we on this subject? It is

found in some words our Lord addressed to His Father in prayer just before He left this world. Our Lord was leaving the "large upper room furnished" where He had just inaugurated the Lord's Supper, and was wending His way to Gethsemane and Calvary with all that that was to mean, when He poured out His heart in prayer to His Father. What a wonderful privilege to have this sacred prayer recorded for our reverent meditation. In it our Lord placed His disciples in the place of testimony, which He Himself had in this world. We read,

"As Thou hast sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world." (John 17: 18).

Well endowed were these disciples, for our Lord tells of four things as His gift to them:—

- (1) **Eternal life**, the possession of every believer on the Lord Jesus Christ.
- (2) **The words**, which the Father gave Him to communicate, making them wise as to spiritual blessings and relationships.
- (3) **The word** His Father gave Him, the testimony of which led to His rejection. The disciples would taste the same rejection in their turn.
- (4) **The glory** the Father gave to the Son, surely glory acquired by Him as Son of Man, to be shared with His own, and for the display of which we long and wait.

Speaking of the gift of eternal life our Lord said of Himself,

"As Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him." (John 17: 2).

In this we get a great contrast to Adam. Power over

all flesh was given to our first parent. (Gen. 1: 28). At the best Adam could only **describe** life, for he gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field, but he could not **communicate** life. Alas! how soon he failed in his trust, sinned, fell, carrying with him in his fall the creation over which he had been placed.

Our Lord, on the contrary, not only possessed power over all flesh, but was able to **communicate** life, so we read He was empowered to give eternal life to as many as the Father gave Him. So we read:

“ The first man Adam was made a living soul ; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit.” (1 Cor. 15: 45).

Thus clearly is marked the great contrast between our Lord and Adam, “ who is the figure of Him that was to come.” (Rom. 5: 14).

Our Lord then proceeded to throw immense light upon the subject of eternal life. He breathed these wonderful words into the ear of His Father, and recorded by the Holy Spirit of God for our learning,

“ And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent.” (John 17: 3).

Two wonderful things are stated here as marking eternal life:

- (1) The knowledge of the Father.
- (2) The knowledge of the Lord Jesus as the sent One of the Father.

Scripture speaks of the entrance of the Son of God into this world as a new beginning. The following Scripture clearly shows how these two things — the knowledge of the Father, and the knowledge of the Lord Jesus as

the sent One of the Father — came to pass. We read:

“ That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.” (1 John 1: 1-4).

What a wonderful education these Galilean fishermen had when they companied with the Lord of glory during His three-and-a-half years of public ministry on this earth. They saw His perfect life. They heard His words. They beheld the power of His word, as He went about doing good, healing the sick, the blind, the deaf, the lame, the leper, raising by His word the dead to life again, preaching the gospel to the poor. Wonder of wonders there was manifested before their eyes the Eternal Life, which was with the Father in ages past.

In this, they saw One who was in closest communion with His Father in heaven. This was emphasised by the Apostle John when he wrote:

“ The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth.” (John 1: 14).

How all this opened up a new world to the disciples, standing in vivid contrast and diametrically opposed to the spirit of the age. All this little by little formed their minds as to who He was, till He became the Object of adoring worship. In turn He revealed the Father to them, who seeketh worshippers, who shall worship Him in spirit and in truth. (John 4: 23).

Thus was formed true Christian fellowship, consisting of a common and powerful attraction to the Person of the Lord Jesus, and of the knowledge of the Father, passed on by the apostles to ourselves, a fellowship with the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. No wonder our joy may be full. In proportion as we are drawn to the Lord Jesus and to the Father, so we shall be drawn to each other.

But in making the Father known a good deal is plainly implied. In that wonderful prayer of our Lord, recorded in John 17, we find Him definitely addressing His Father. When He expressed the desire for His own that they might know "THEE, the only true God," we find the words, "the only true God" are added to show in a world of heathen gods who the THEE is, that is addressed. The THEE is the Father. Now who knows the Father?

A simple illustration may help at this point. A man has four children. Doubtless he knows scores of children as he moves about among his friends, but ONLY four children in the world know him as father. Why? Because they are his children, and share his nature and by reason of this are entitled to know him as father.

So it is in divine things. If any reader of these lines knows the Father, it is because he is His child, a partaker of the divine nature (2 Peter 1: 4) Eternal Life carries with it the relationship of children to the Father.

The Apostle John speaks a good deal of the family relationship.

"Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons [children, N. Trans.] of God; therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not. Beloved, now are we the sons [children, N. Trans.] of God." (1 John 3: 1, 2).

The Apostle John never uses the word, **sons**, for be-

lievers, but always the word, **children**. The Revised Version and Darby's New Translation bear this out. The term, "children," sets forth relationship, origin, sharing the same nature as the Father. The term, "sons" sets forth dignity, association, intelligence.

"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." (Rom. 8: 14).

The Apostle Paul stresses the dignity of sonship, as the Apostle John stresses the relationship of children. In both cases it is on the ground of the possession of eternal life, for children are sons, and sons are children.

It is clear that the two words, **eternal life**, do not in themselves indicate what our Lord unfolded in His prayer to His Father; that eternal life is characterized by the knowledge of the Father, and of Jesus Christ, the Sent One of the Father. This we could only know by revelation.

So we may go further and ask what is our portion, the portion of eternal life? We read,

"And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." (Rom. 8: 17) .

If any of us happened to be heir of some wealthy relative, that would be considered a great matter. But what can we say when we are told that we are **heirs of God**? It is passing wonderful! Do we know in any way what our portion will be? Assuredly, for we are told that we are "joint heirs with Christ." This means that every glory our Lord has gained as Man, His people will share with Him, short of partaking of Deity.

The Father's house is the home of eternal life. New Creation is the sphere of eternal life. The body of glory will be the tabernacle of eternal life. Relationship with God as Father, astounding blessing as surely it is, is

wrapped up in eternal life. Blessed with "all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (Eph. 1: 3) is the heritage of eternal life. Fellowship with the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, the fruit of eternal life, will be seen in all its fulness in the coming day of glory. Then shall be seen the triumph of Christ's building, against which the gates of **hades** shall not prevail. What an answer to all the breakdown and failure of the responsible church of God on earth! There is no failure with eternal life. May we realise the breadth and length and depth and height of divine love, and that with all saints, and wait for that moment when the flesh shall be left behind, and we shall be in the scene where there shall be no crying, tears, pain or death.

But now for a last and very practical word. Eternal life is a life to be lived. It is not sufficient to know that as believers we have eternal life, and to be content with the bare statement, as if it had no practical bearing. The practical aspect of eternal life is seen in the Apostle's writings. He writes to Timothy, his son in the faith, exhorting him to:

"Fight the good fight of faith, LAY HOLD ON ETERNAL LIFE." (1 Tim. 6: 12).

Lower down in the same chapter he instructs Timothy to exhort rich brethren, who have a goodly portion of this world's goods. We read:

"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" [or, what is really life]. (1 Tim. 6: 17-19).

And surely if the exhortation is addressed to rich brethren, it comes to everyone of us; that, as believers,

we should act in the spirit of this exhortation, each according to his or her ability. Are we not encouraged, that whilst the rich of their abundance cast into the Temple treasury, it was the widow with her two mites, that was singled out for special praise?

Nor is the Apostle John behindhand in urging practice in consonance with his teaching as to eternal life. We ought to love our brethren. If needs be, we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. If we see our brother in need, and shut up our bowels of compassion, how dwelleth the love of God in us? Loving in word and tongue does not suffice. We must love in deed and in truth. That is the proof that we are in the truth. We should love God and keep His commandments.

Scripture throughout is practical. 1 Corinthians 13, that great love chapter of the Bible, tells us what love DOES. Hebrews 11, that great faith chapter, tells us what faith DOES. And the Scriptures we have been examining tell us how eternal life manifests itself.

Two men might each possess a garden. One neglects his, paying little heed to it, allowing it to be over-run with weeds, making the garden as worthless, as if he did not possess it. Is this not like a carnal Christian, a worldly Christian, who is not exercised about refusing the flesh, and living in the energy of the eternal life he possesses?

The other man is diligent in caring for his garden, pays great attention to it in every way, and is rewarded as he partakes of the fruit of his toil. Is this not like the Christian who puts first things first, and seeks to LAY HOLD ON ETERNAL LIFE, on that which is life indeed.

“ If we live in the Spirit, let us also WALK IN THE SPIRIT.” (Gal. 5: 25).

We need to possess our possessions.

By the same Author

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