

“This is eternal life - ”

/What is eternal life?\

That is a question for the ages. This gets at the heart of being human. Of knowing we will die and trying to forestall death. What happens when we die?

Today we will learn the answer to this question. And we'll spend our entire lives as Christians coming to understand the answer. .

We will learn it from the ultimate authority on such matters. We will learn it from one and only person who is qualified to tell us.

/Jesus Christ, God's Son, will tell us. \

His answer is the definitive answer. It's the only true answer.

/Jesus has the words of eternal life, after all.\

John 6:66-69

66 As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore. 67 So Jesus said to the twelve, "You do not want to go away also, do you?" 68 Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life. 69 "We have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God."

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Make a note with what Peter said here. We have believed and COME TO KNOW.

/Jesus is the only one qualified to define eternal life because He IS eternal life.\

1 John 5:11-12

And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. 12 He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.

/He IS the way, the truth, and THE LIFE (John 14:6). \

/He IS the resurrection and the LIFE (John 11:25).\

/In Him WAS life (John 1:4).\

So he oughta know!

It's His life, and it's His gift to us.

John 17

1 Jesus spoke these things; and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You, 2 even as You gave Him authority over all flesh, that to all whom You have given Him, He may give eternal life. 3 "This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. 4 "I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do. 5 "Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.

/This IS eternal life, that they - all that the Father has given Jesus - , that they may come to know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.\

I challenge anyone to come up with a better definition of eternal life than this.

After all, God the Father gave Jesus the authority to GIVE eternal life.

He oughta know what it is.

/God's glory is bound up in Jesus giving eternal life to those whom God gave Him.\

God is glorified each time Jesus gives a fallen sinner who believes in Him eternal life.

Now, I want you to notice something. We want to know what eternal life is.

/We may have our own pre-conceived ideas about what eternal life is.\

We may think that it means living forever. We may think of it as some awesome fountain of youth.

But here Jesus tells us, and He says it simply and directly and logically, mathematically, precise.

What is eternal life?

Eternal life IS...

/Eternal life EQUALS....\

Equals WHAT?

That those whom God has given Jesus, those to whom Jesus has given eternal life,

/That they may come to know you, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.\

Eternal life equals such people getting to know the one true God, and Jesus Christ whom the Father, the one True God, sent.

/Eternal life = coming to know God and Jesus Christ.\ <pic>

God sent Jesus Christ into the world so that whoever believes in Him will not perish but – HAVE eternal life.

Think of this with me now. Consider our equation.

Eternal life = getting to know the one true God and Jesus Christ whom this one True God has sent.

Now you may remember from math class or if you're really sophisticated, from logic class, you may remember a principle:

/When one thing equals another thing, whatever is true about one side of the equals sign is also true about the other side of the equals sign.\

Why do I put it that way? Because that principle opens things up tremendously.

/Now, do believers (by definition) know the one true God? Yes.\

They know He exists. They know He is holy. They know that He sent His only Son for us, to be our Savior.

And other things as well.

/Well then, do believers know Jesus Christ? By definition, YES.\

They have to know and believe what God has told them about His Son.

They have to know these things because these are the things that a person must believe about Jesus in order to be saved. His humanity. His deity. His death on the cross. His burial. His resurrection. That He died for them.

OK then. Eternal life EQUALS knowing the one true God, and Jesus Christ whom He sent.

/Believers know the one true God, and they know Jesus Christ.\

Therefore.....

/Believers HAVE eternal life.\

/In other words, eternal life is the present possession of each and every believer.\

John 17:1 Jesus spoke these things; and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You, 2 even as You gave Him authority over all flesh, that to all whom You have given Him, He may give eternal life.

/Eternal life is a gift. \ It's a gift from Jesus Christ to everyone that God has given Him. Jesus gives eternal life to whosoever believes in Him.

John 10:26-28

26 "But you do not believe because you are not of My sheep. 27 "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; 28 and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand.

And when does a person receive that gift?

/ A person receives the gift of eternal life when he or she believes in Jesus Christ.\

John 5:24

24 "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.

John 6:47 "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has eternal life.

Why am I laboring at this? Why am I taking this one step at a time? What conclusion can we take from this?

/Very simply this: we believers HAVE eternal life NOW. \

We've had it ever since we first believed in Christ.

/Eternal life is our present possession.\

We don't have to wait to get to heaven to receive eternal life. As believers in Christ, we have already received eternal life.

But there's more. Hold onto your hats because this next part is mind blowing.

Col 1:9-10

9 For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, 10 so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;

/Can we grow in our knowledge of the one true God? Yes, we can!

Col 2:1-3

2 For I want you to know how great a struggle I have on your behalf and for those who are at Laodicea, and for all those who have not personally seen my face, 2 that their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love, and attaining to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true knowledge of God's mystery, that is, Christ Himself, 3 in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

/So....Can we also grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ?

Yes, certainly. Peter uses those exact words at the end of his second letter.

2 Peter 3:18

18 but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.

Look at how Paul put it in Philippians. When he wrote these words, he had been a believer – and an apostle!- for over 20 years.

Phil 3:10

that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; 11 in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

Therefore....Bring in our equation:

/Eternal life equals knowing the one True God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent.\

Here's where our equation goes into overdrive –

Since we can grow in the knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ....

/We can grow in eternal life! Now. During our lives here on earth!\

This is confirmed in the epistles. Well, this is tremendous, isn't it!

/Eternal life is a new kind of life. It's a new quality of life. \

Eternal life is the life that Jesus gives.

John 10:10

10 "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.

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And here's an amazing thing.

/Even though we already have this life, the epistles also tell us that we can take hold of this life!\

1 Tim 6:12

12 Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called, and you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

My gosh, this is tremendous. We have eternal life, and we can take hold of it. We can live in eternal life, we can reap eternal life. We can grow with respect to eternal life. We can experience more and more eternal life – now. In this present life in our mortal bodies.

/We can grow in our capacity to live in eternal life NOW.\

Wow!

Next time, we are going to learn HOW we can take hold of eternal life. How we can grow in this life that Jesus has given us.

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Eternal life is this – that we may come to know more and more fully.

We CAN.

That word ginosko in John 17:3 is in the present tense active voice subjunctive mood.

Why should I care, you ask?

Three good reasons.

Present means that we are living in it now and will continue to live in it as we come to know more about God the Father and Jesus Christ His son.

Active voice means that we participate in the activity of this life, namely coming to know

Subjunctive mood means that we can continue to grow in this knowledge, or we can arrest our development as it were.

We can't lose eternal life. After all, it's a gift from God. But we can fail to grow in this life.

OK, I hope that grabs our attention.

This is an amazing life. It's an astounding opportunity. WE can either take advantage of this, or not.

If I can repeat a picture I gave last week,

Eternal life is like a secret garden. It's on your property. You have it. It's your present possession.

But it's hidden. So hidden that most people are barely aware that it even exists.

They think it's something that only exists in heaven .

Well, it's heavenly – but we already have received the gift of this garden.

But here's the thing: we get to decide how often we will go into this garden. And we get to decide how much of the garden to explore.

The garden has a sweet aroma , the aroma of all kinds of delightful flowers.

WE'll never enjoy the aroma and the colors and the miracle of living things growing before our eyes if...

If we never take the key we've been given and open the door and step into the secret garden!

Now here's the point of this illustration:

The secret garden is eternal life. We have it now.

We HAVE eternal life NOW. In this present life here on earth. We've had it since the moment we believed in Christ. And we'll always have it.

But here's the issue: will we live in it during our remaining days on earth? Will we reap eternal life? Will we take hold of this eternal life?

The key is faith in God's word.

And when we go into the garden, the one who gave us this garden also gives us instructions about how we are to act, how we are to live, in this garden.

We can come to know the many delights, the rich quality of life, in this garden.

Only with the garden of eternal life, we live in it by coming to know God the Father and Jesus Christ better.

And how do we do that?

What does it mean to come to know Them better?

Well, to get that answer, we need to take our key and open our Bibles!

John 17:1 Jesus spoke these things; and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You, 2 even as You gave Him authority over all flesh, that to all whom You have given Him, He may give eternal life. 3 "This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.

This is a remarkable definition of eternal life. Notice that Jesus says nothing about Eternal life begins the moment we believe in Christ. It is our present possession.

John 5:24

24 "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.

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1 John 5:11-13

11 And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. 12 He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.

13 These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.

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Eternal life is life with God. We possess this life in Christ.

God is not said to have eternal life. God grants eternal life to believers.

That we may know the one True God, and Jesus Christ whom He has sent.

Eternal life is the life we receive when we are born again.

1 Peter 1:3-5

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of

Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, 5 who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

It is the life of the New Man. We are a new creation with a new life.

This eternal life is a life we live in our relationship with God. It cannot exist apart from Him, or apart from Jesus Christ whom He has sent.

In Christ was life, and the life was the Light of men.

That they may know You,

Knowing God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent. This IS eternal life.

TO know Him is to be living this new, eternal life.

Col 1:9-12

9 For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, 10 so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; 11 strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously 12 giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light.

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Thus, as we get to know Him better, we reap eternal life, and in that sense we grow in our experience of eternal life.

Or rather, this life grows for us.

The relationship is the knowing, and the knowing is eternal life.

To grow closer to Him is to know Him better.

Let not a mighty man.....but that He understands and knows Me.

That is a far richer , more powerful life.

Eternal life is a life infinitely more wonderful than human existence.

Eternal life does not mean existing forever. A rock can exist a long time. Unbelievers will exist forever too. But with what quality of life?

Eternal life is greater than the human life of the unbeliever, qualitatively better than the life we were given when we were born.

Eternal life has a timeless quality. It is otherworldly.

And yet it is extremely practical.

In fact, Jesus describes several of its characteristics in His prayer in chapter 17.

John 17:13

13 "But now I come to You; and these things I speak in the world so that they may have My joy made full in themselves.

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One characteristic of eternal life is complete joy.

John 17:19

19 "For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth.

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Another characteristic of eternal life is pure truth.

John 17:20-21

"I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; 21 that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me.

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Perfect unity is a quality of eternal life.

John 17:22-26

22 "The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; 23 I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me.

The love of God is another aspect of eternal life.

Seeing Christ in His glory is the ultimate expression of eternal life.

24 "Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.

25 "O righteous Father, although the world has not known You, yet I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me; 26 and I have made Your name known to them, and will make it known, so that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them."

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To know Him fully is the same thing as being glorified with Him.

He desires us to be with Him where He is so that we might see His glory.

Col 3:1-4

3 Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. 3 For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.

That is our destiny. That is our future.

So what?

Eternal life is like a secret garden. We possess it, but that is not the same as living in it.

For far too many Christians, eternal life remains a secret. They don't even know that they have it.

Consider the alternative to eternal life.

What life do people live who cannot live this eternal life because they do not know the one true God, since they have no relationship with His Son, Jesus Christ?

An alienated life.

A meaningless existence.

A life of slavery.

A life of fear.

A life of corruption.