

Reaping eternal life.

We have been stepping through our relationship with eternal life in this life.

We began with the definition of eternal life:
coming to know the One True God, and Jesus Christ whom He has sent.

John 17:3 "This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.

And we learned that every believer has eternal life now. It is his or her present possession.

/Believers HAVE eternal life now.\

/And eternal life is something we can also LIVE IN now.\

In the words of 1 Timothy 6:12, we can take hold of eternal life.

Today, we take the next step.

/Today we are going to learn how to reap eternal life.\

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

/And that means we can GROW in our capacity to live in eternal life, now, in time.\

To borrow terminology from gardening, the vine of eternal life has been planted.

/This life is in Christ. In fact, this life IS Christ. I am the resurrection. \

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.

When we believed in Christ, we received eternal life as our possession.

We have been planted in Christ. He is the vine, and we are the branches.

/And the purpose of the branches on a vine is to bear fruit.\

Or, as Paul puts it in Galatians 6, the goal is to reap eternal life. Now. In time.

/But in order to reap eternal life, we first have to take hold of it.\

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.

Then we have to grow in our capacity to live this eternal life.

And that is a day by day, season by season, year by year thing.

We develop character by going through adversity, and persevering. We have a daily life or walk. If we walk by means of the Spirit, we grow.

If we do not get weary, we will reap. The branch will produce fruit - the fruit of the Spirit.

OK so that's the message today in a nutshell.

Let's get to it.

We have eternal life, and we can also take hold of it.

Last Sunday, we learned from 1 Timothy 6 how we take hold of eternal life.

1 Tim 6:11-12

11 But flee from these things, you man of God, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness. 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..

How do we take hold of eternal life according to 1 Timothy 6?

/Well, the first thing is to flee from anything that is the opposite of that.\

Flee from youthful lusts and wrangling about words. Flee from the love of money.

/Flee....and then pursue the things that make for living in eternal life.\

What things?

and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness.

/How do you take hold of eternal life? Pursue the things that are pleasing to God.\

We strive to imitate His character: His righteousness, His love, His gentleness.

/These qualities fit us for living the life that God has called us to live. They equip us to serve others – especially believers.\

Now remember our rich young man. He was in love with money. Coveting is the opposite of taking hold of eternal life.

/So, what should a rich man do to take hold of that which is life indeed?\

1Ti 6:17 Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy. 18 Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, 19 storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed.

/Do good. Be rich in good works.\

That expression “do good”. Jesus went about doing good. Doing good is how we take hold of eternal life.

So now we come to the climax of our study of eternal life.

We have eternal life. We can take hold of eternal life.

/How do we reap eternal life?\

Gal 6:6-10

6 The one who is taught the word is to share all good things with the one who teaches him. 7 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. 8 For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. 9 Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary. 10 So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.

/We reap eternal life by sowing to the Spirit.\

And how does this passage describe “sowing to the Spirit”?

For one thing, the one who is taught to word is to share all good things from the one who teaches him.

There's that idea of good works again.

/Once again we are given the opposite - the opposite of sowing to the Spirit is sowing to the flesh. \

We have been given time. We have been given the world's goods. We have been given talents and abilities. How will we choose to use those things?

/If we spend them on our "flesh" – selfishly, sinfully – we will reap corruption. \

/But if we spend our time and our energy and money and talents and our bodies in the service of God's will for us, we will reap eternal life.\

/ Here we reap eternal life by not losing heart in doing good to all people, and especially to believers.\

Let's also look at the neighborhood here, chapter 5 of Galatians.

Gal 5:13-16

13 For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. 14 For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF." 15 But if you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another.

16 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.

/This is talking about our walk, our daily lives – how we redeem the time we are given between sowing and reaping. Make the most of it!\

/Well, the whole Law is fulfilled in one word: LOVE.\

In between the sowing and the reaping , the branch needs to abide in the vine. We do that by serving one another.

And as we serve one another, we abide in love, and the fruit ripens. We continue to walk by means of the Spirit. And eventually we reap if we do not grow weary.

Gal 5:22-23

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

*/What do we reap? The fruit of the Spirit. *

Jesus used the word “abide” in connection with bearing fruit.

John 15:4-14

4 "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. 5 "I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. 6 "If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned. 7 "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. 8 "My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples. 9 "Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. 10 "If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. 11

"These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.

/Bearing fruit glorifies the Father – the One who has given us eternal life.\

*12 "This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you.
13 "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. 14
"You are My friends if you do what I command you.*

We can have a friendship with Christ! That is truly eternal life. Day by day, we can see Him more clearly. We can love Him more dearly. And follow Him more nearly.

And we are His friends if we do what He commands us. And He commands us to love one another.

/And love involves giving. Love means doing good for others. It means doing good works for others.\

1 John 3:14-18

14 We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death. 15 Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. 16 We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. 17 But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? 18 Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.

/Love means living for others. Laying down our lives for the brethren. THIS is what it means to reap eternal life.\

Here is what living in eternal life looks like:

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.

I want to end this study with a passage I think will inspire you to serve one another without getting weary:

Eph 3:14-21

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, 15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, 16 that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, 19 and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.

20 Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, 21 to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.

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Next up: John 17:6-19

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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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.