

Everlasting Life

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[0 : 00] The Gospel according to John chapter 17, we read verses 1 to 5. The Gospel according to John chapter 17 verses 1 to 5.

These words spake Jesus and lifted up his eyes to heaven and said, Father the hour has come, glorify thy Son that thy Son also may glorify thee, as thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.

And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent. I have glorified thee on the earth, I have finished the work which thou givest me to do, and now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.

Now we come this morning to the last clause in the Apostles' Creed, and that is the life everlasting. I believe in the life everlasting. And you might say, well, that's a fitting conclusion to the Apostles' Creed, because you might say, in effect, I believe in eternity.

[1 : 20] I believe in the immortality of the soul. But that's not what these words are saying to us. Eternal life, or everlasting life, is something the scriptures describe, but do not formally define.

But we see it in its contrast. For instance, the lack of eternal life is equated with being unsaved, with being condemned, with being lost.

We have to look at that which is lacking, and how, if we lack eternal life, we are lost, we are condemned, we are unsaved.

Remember how it says in John chapter 3, how the Son of Man must be lifted up, just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

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.

[2 : 33] And we see, therefore, what eternal life is, and what everlasting life is, by the contrast. If we do not have it, we're going to perish, we're going to be lost, we're going to be condemned.

Now let's see how this fits in to what we've been saying about God's purpose and plan. We've been saying that God made a perfect creation, but man fell, man rebelled against God, and that perfect creation fell with him.

And it brought death into this world. Death for man. That death was spiritual, that death was physical, and that death was eternal.

That's what man became subject to by his disobedience. But then God's Son came into this world in order to destroy the works of the devil. He came to defeat Satan, and he came to save a people.

And in order to do that, he had to die the death of the cross, in order to meet the just punishment of those he came to save. And he went through the agony of the cross, in order to save his people.

[3 : 47] And then he was raised from the dead, and he was exalted to the right hand of God. And from that position at the right hand of God, he gave his Holy Spirit to apply the work that he had accomplished to the people he came to save.

And that's what we've been looking at in the Apostles' Creed. Now in this chapter, John 17, we have Jesus offering up this high priestly prayer. The incarnate Son, who came to this earth, is now about to return to his Father.

And the route that he is taking to return to his Father is the route by the shameful and painful death of the cross. That's what he says in verse 1 when he says, The hour has come.

The hour upon which the destiny of the world hangs. The hour upon which the salvation of mankind hangs. This hour, this hour of destiny has come.

The hour for his crucifixion. The hour in which he's going to save his people. The hour in which he's going to glorify the Father. And as this hour has come, his great petition is, Glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee.

[5 : 09] Now glorify can mean to give praise and honor to. But here it means clothed in splendor. He's saying, Clothed in splendor thy Son, that thy Son also may be clothed in splendor.

In other words, what he's praying for is reverse the self-emptying. Reverse the humiliation. When Christ came into this world to save his people, he had to go through a humiliation. But he's coming to the end of his humiliation. And his exaltation is going to begin. The cross and the tomb are the lowest points in his humiliation.

And then there's going to be the exaltation. And so he's saying, Glorify your Son in the death of the cross and in the resurrection in order that your Son may glorify you.

God is clothed in splendor as Christ brings about the death and exaltation. Exaltation. As the Son is glorified in his death and exaltation, so the Father will be glorified.

[6 : 28] That's what Jesus is praying for. Because this is the way the Father is going to be glorified. The Father is going to be seen as he's never seen before in the death of the Lord Jesus Christ.

There's a glory centered upon the cross. No wonder Paul could say, God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ.

For contrary to all appearances, that's where God's glory is displayed. It's displayed in the cross of Christ. And so the Son is praying that he may be glorified in order that the Father may be glorified. And then he says at the beginning of verse 2, just as you have given him power over all flesh. Just as you have given him authority over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.

And you will notice that there's three givings in verse 2. Three givings in verse 2. First of all, there is as many as thou hast given him.

[7 : 39] And that tells us that God gave a people to Christ. God's eternal purpose was that he might give a people to the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Father made a donation or a presentation to the Son. And that donation was a multitude which no man could number. All that the Father giveth me shall come to me.

They're all given to him in the everlasting covenant. There was there a transaction in the eternity past when the Father made a donation to the Son.

And the donation was a people, a multitude. As many as thou hast given me. They were given by the Father to the Son.

But then the second giving is thou hast given him power over all flesh. And this is referring to the decision that was taken before time.

[8 : 42] He gave authority to Christ. Now you could say that was just a purpose. But you see, when God is almighty, the decision and the doing are co-extensive.

Everything that God plans to do is as much as it is accomplished. because God's purposes always come to pass. And the authority that is spoken of here is not the authority inherent in being the Son of God.

It's the authority given him over all humanity in the light of that obedience that he is going to undertake. God is going to give him power and authority over all flesh.

It's as good as if it was accomplished because it's the purpose of God. Thou hast given him power over all flesh. That's the second giving.

And what's the third giving? Well, the third giving takes place in time. And that is that he should give eternal life to these many people.

[9 : 52] He is given the people and then he's given the authority and then he gives the eternal life to the people. And of course this cannot be immortality because these people already have immortality.

It can't refer to eternal existence because they've already got eternal existence. It must be something they could not otherwise experience.

This eternal life that Jesus is speaking about is something that if not for his receiving a people from his father and giving him power over all flesh these people could not have.

What is it then? Well, we know from scripture and especially from John's writings that this life that he is speaking about is the life that was in the sun.

In him was life says John. And writing in his first epistle where 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.

[11 : 07] 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.

So the eternal life is the life that is in Christ. It's the life of the word says John. He says it in his gospel and he says it in his epistle.

The eternal life that I am speaking about is the life that is manifested in Jesus Christ. And then he goes on to say that which we the apostles have seen and heard declare we unto you.

we have handled this life we have seen this life we have looked upon it in Jesus Christ. Now we want you to taste it we want you to experience it.

That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you that you also may have fellowship with us. And truly our fellowship is with the father and with his son the Lord Jesus Christ.

[12 : 15] And you see that life is in him. Remember what Peter said Lord to whom shall we go thou hast the words of eternal life.

And so this life is in the son. The source of the spiritual life to men is that which in the first instance was the source of natural life to all creatures.

He came to give life to this world to give life to creatures and he comes back to give spiritual life to dead souls.

You see the revelation of it is in Christ. Life is in the word in the Lord Jesus Christ and that life is communicated to men to sinners in order that they might come into the fellowship of the Trinity.

One of the best commentaries we know on 1st John is entitled Fellowship in the Life Eternal. It's written by a man George Finley a Methodist but it's an excellent commentary and it catches the whole thrust of John's epistle.

[13 : 29] Fellowship in the Life Eternal. We are called into the fellowship of the Trinity and that Trinity has eternal life dwelling in them.

It's not only the quantity it's the quality. It's not only the length but the actual quality. And Jesus Christ has come into this world to call us into that fellowship.

Fellowship in a life eternal. The knowledge and fellowship with God. And that's what John says here that this eternal life turns on nothing more and nothing less than the knowledge of the true God.

He tells us that Christ came into the world to give eternal life. And this is life eternal that they might know thee the only true God and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.

This is life eternal if you want to know what it is. This is life eternal to know God. And to know God transforms a person and introduces him to a different quality of life.

[14 : 41] That's what John is saying. To know God means that you are transformed. The very knowledge of this God has a tremendous effect upon you and it introduces you to a quality of life you have not known.

And so this knowledge says John is first and foremost the knowledge of the only true God. It's the knowledge of the only true God.

In other words Jesus is saying it's not possible to choose any kind of God and think you can get eternal life through the knowledge of that God.

Now there were many gods in the ancient world. The Greeks had their gods and they had their notions of immortality for the gods and for those who are affected by the gods.

But Jesus is saying in effect all these gods are idols dumb. They are nothing. They don't stand for anything. They don't they're of no value to anyone and you can't expect immortality or eternal life from these gods.

[15 : 55] There's no way that any false god is going to give you life because they're dead. How can dead things give you life? It's the only living and true God that can give us life.

And that's why we read in John chapter 1 John chapter 5 at the very end there and how significant it is verses 20 and 21. This is a true God. John is finishing his epistle and he says this is a true God and eternal life.

And what's his last exhortation to the people he's writing to? Little children keep yourselves some idols. Don't for a moment think there's any other God but a living and true God.

All these so-called gods are dead. They've got no influence or power or life. Don't go after them. Keep yourselves some idols.

Know the living and true God. That's where you'll get life. That's where you'll get blessing. But the other thing that Jesus says here to his father, it is not possible to choose the way that we shall know this God.

[17 : 10] We can't choose how we're going to know this God. We can't say that some Mohammed or someone is going to lead us to this God. No, it's only one way that we can know this God and that is the way that he is revealed and the way that is acceptable to him.

And Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent. You see, it's God's way of getting to know him and the way of getting to know him is through the Lord Jesus Christ and there's no other way.

You see, the Old Testament prophecies and promises all point forward to the Lord Jesus Christ. There's a day coming, says Jeremiah, when all shall know him from the least to the greatest. They have that direct knowledge of God. They'll know him personally. And Habakkuk says that there's a day coming when the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

The knowledge of God is going to greatly increase. It's going to come through the revelation of Jesus Christ. It's going to come through the Son, who is the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person.

[18 : 31] And that's how we're going to come to know God, through Jesus Christ. I am the way, I am the truth, I am the life. There's only one way to come to know God.

There's only one truth we've got to learn. And there's only one life, and that life is in Christ. So this knowledge is knowledge of the only true God.

But secondly, it's knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. The knowledge of God cannot be divorced from the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Unitarianism will never bring you to God. It will never bring you to God. God. Because if there's only one God as they believe, not a trinity, how can we come to the knowledge of this God?

And so the knowledge of Jesus is the ultimate access to the knowledge of God. It is through Jesus Christ that we come to know God.

[19 : 35] John says in his gospel, we beheld his glory as the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. You see, he must make God's glory visible to the people.

His Father has given him this people and he is charged with making known God's glory to them. And it's in the cross in particular, as we have said already, that Jesus reveals the Father's glory. He tells us what the heart of God is like. He makes known what the Father is like by his death upon the cross. And there there is a revelation of the glory of God.

Glorify thy Son that thy Son also may glorify thee. God is clothed in splendor in the eyes of those who perceive what he is doing at the cross.

What he is achieving by the death of Christ. This is what God is like. This is the revelation of God. This is how we come to know God.

[20 : 48] We come to know him through the Lord Jesus Christ, suffering and dying on the cross. And that's where we come into contact with God.

Because any other place we would be consumed. consumed. If we tried to meet with this God in any other spot in the universe, we would be consumed by the holiness of God.

But because there is a place where God's holiness and his love meet, where his justice and his love meet, at the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, it is displaying the heart and mind of God.

that this is a God who loves sinners, but a God who hates their sin. And that love for sinners sent the Lord Jesus Christ into this world to suffer for us, to meet the just demands of God against us. And there and there alone can you see the glory of God. You can see it in some way in creation. It tells us about the majesty of God.

[21 : 59] It tells us about the power of God. But if we want to know about the holiness of God, if we want to know about the love of God, if we want to know the mercy of God, then we've got to go to the cross.

And the cross is a marvelous display of the attributes of God. That's the glory of God before our eyes. The world can't see it.

It's all a mess to the world. An innocent man being put to death on a cross and all the mess attending it and accompanied with it. It's just a horrible thing to the eyes of the natural man.

But to the eyes of the Christian, it's the most glorious thing in all the world. He is there seeing God as he really is. There's a fresh revelation of God manifested to him in the cross.

God in all his glory and all his attributes together in harmony there at the cross. And his eyes are opened. But you see, not only are his eyes opened, but in that process of his eyes being opened, his heart is changed.

[23 : 11] There's enlightenment, there's illumination, but also there's life giving power. There's life for a look at the crucified one. There's life at this moment for thee.

It's not only enlightenment, it's life. And the Holy Spirit ensures that life. There's not only illumination and enlightenment, but there's change, there's rebirth, there's regeneration.

We are made partakers of the divine nature, says Peter. And that's how we have eternal life. The life of God in the soul of man.

The life of Jesus in the soul of man. That's how eternal life becomes ours. It comes to us in Jesus and is made over to us in Jesus.

And in union with him, we receive all that he has. And we have life with Christ. We have union with Christ.

[24 : 14] We have fellowship with Christ. We have fellowship with God. God. These things are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Son of God.

And at believing, you might have life through his name. These things I write unto you, says John, that you also may have fellowship with us. And truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.

We want that fellowship to spread. We want more people to partake of it. And therefore we're preaching the gospel to you. We're declaring Christ to you.

We're placarding him before you. Because that's the means through which you are enlightened and that's the means through which you are changed. You are given life. You're given eternal life.

Again, John says, this is a record that God has given us eternal life and this life is in his Son. He that hath a Son hath life.

[25 : 13] And he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. It all turns on whether or not you have the Son of God.

It all turns on whether or not you have the Lord Jesus Christ. Because if you have him, you've got life. If him, you've got all things.

You see the glory of God. You're made partakers of the divine nature. You have eternal life. dwelling in you. Now that's a marvelous thing.

Because now the age to come can no longer be set off absolutely from the present age. That's what Jesus coming to the world has done.

We talk about the present age and the age to come. But you can't set them off like that absolutely. Because the glorious thing is this.

[26 : 14] That the age to come has already come in Christ. It came in his person. And it's being communicated to his people. So not only does Jesus here upon earth belong to the age to come, but everyone who sees him and is transformed by that seeing and has eternal life, within them are the powers of the age to come.

come. Isn't that a marvelous thing that sitting there in the pew today, as a believer, in you are the powers of the age to come.

We don't grasp the glory of it. That in every believer, in every congregation, met in the name of Christ, we have the powers of the age to come.

They're already at work. What a wonderful thing if we only grasped hold of that. If we saw the potential in every believer, in every congregation, that they are possessing the powers of the age to come.

And you see, that's where we are contrary to so many today. Most of people sitting in churches in our land today think they can sail through life and at the end of it expect a heaven.

[27 : 41] But you see, there's no heaven for such people, because there's no heaven unless your heaven has begun below. The men of grace have found glory began below.

And that's the only guarantee we can give you today of getting to heaven. If you have Christ, you have life. life is the life to come and it's already in you.

That's the only guarantee. God known on earth is the guarantee of heaven. Christ believed on earth is the guarantee of heaven.

Don't put your trust in anything else but in that, because there's no other way. But to know God and to know Christ transforms a person and introduces him to the life to come.

And what will the life to come be? Well, it will only be the very presence in that glory together. Because Jesus at the end of this prayer, at verse 24, says, Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, again, whom thou hast given me, may be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me.

[29 : 04] All this giving, you see, the giving of the people, the giving of the glory, the giving of the authority, it's all of God. And heaven will be beholding the glory of God, the glory of Christ in his very presence.

So, people will change their place but not their company. They'll change their place but not their company because they've been journeying with this Christ here on earth. They've been traveling with him, they've been walking with him, they've been beholding his glory. So, reaching heaven is just another stage and they come to that glory and the full manifestation of it and that's their heaven.

But you see, their heaven began on earth. And unless our heaven begins on earth, we will never reach that heaven above. And what is the alternative?

Well, the alternative, as we've said already, is that we will perish. That doesn't mean that we'll cease to exist. No, that's a terrible thing.

[30 : 14] If we cease to exist, it would be a good thing, conditional immortality, but that's not going to be so. We're going to go on.

If we don't believe in Christ, we're going to perish in a sense that we'll have to experience eternal separation. Eternal life is knowing God and being with God.

Eternal death is separation from God in a never-ending eternity. That's the awful thing. Christ was lifted up as a serpent was lifted up in the wilderness that men should not perish but have eternal life. God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life. The provision is there.

And if we despise the provision, if we reject the provision, if we do not believe in God's provision, the dreadful alternative is perishing and perishing eternal.

[31 : 23] We can't contemplate the horror of it as we can't really contemplate and grasp the glory of heaven. We can't grasp the awfulness of hell.

But you see, that's where it all stands. It all turns on whether we know the Lord Jesus Christ, whether we believe in him, whether we accept him as God's provision, the only way that we'll be saved from perishing, and the only way that we shall inherit eternal life.

What a choice, what a neglect, if we neglected all our days and then find ourselves in that everlasting place of death.

May God bless his word to us. Let us pray. O gracious and eternal God, we pray that I'll stir us up to the realities that face us as individuals. We are conscious that we have heard the gospel.

We are not without knowledge of what is required of us, but we pray that we put that knowledge into practice, that we would flee from the wrath to come, that we would seek the Lord Jesus Christ, that we receive eternal life.

[32 : 34] O grant that we would not be slack, but that we would be diligent in seeking of Christ this day, this special day for the things that are spiritual and eternal.

Bless thy word to us, we pray thee, and forgive all our sin, for Jesus' sake. Amen.