

Eternal Life is a Supreme Treasure

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In the book of Titus, first chapter, first two verses, Paul, an apostle or servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness, the hope of eternal life, which God that cannot lie promised before the world began. I'm going to pick out five words, in the hope of eternal life, and talk about that. In the hope of eternal life.

Now, eternal life, I don't think there would be anybody, anywhere, who would deny or even attempt to argue that eternal life is not a supreme treasure, for it is that, eternal life, eternal life. If you don't appreciate those wonderful words, eternal life, think what they would mean if they were uttered in hell.

Think if it should be by some strange and unknown act of God that down there, where is the rich man and all other men who forget God, it should suddenly be announced, God has declared eternal life. There would be joy that would amount to hysteria there, eternal life. May we not overlook how valuable, how precious it is and what a supreme treasure lies in those words, eternal life.

And this is the life that was lost in the disobedience of the fall and brought again to us by the coming of Christ. I am come, said Jesus, that you might have life and that you might have it more abundantly. And everybody knows, John 3, 16, that God loved so the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life. So, this supreme treasure, lost once to us, is now brought back to us by Jesus Christ and given to faith.

Now, the question that arises here where Paul says, in hope of eternal life, for you see, hope is a future thing. Paul said, what a man hath, why does he yet hope for it? You hope for that which you don't have. You cannot hope for that which you have. I think that's so plain that it need not be labored, that we hope for that which we don't have, and if we have it, we cease to hope for it. Hope is lost in realization.

So, in hope of eternal life says that eternal life is future to the church. Paul, now hear it, Paul, a servant and apostle, according to the faith of God's elect, in hope of eternal life. There we have it. Now is eternal life present or future? Do we have it now or are we looking for it? The fact that it says in hope of eternal life indicates that we're looking and hoping for it, for if we had it, why would we yet hope for it?

Now in this, the Bible seems to contradict itself, but I think I'd better put a take notice sign here and say that the word eternal and the word everlasting, when it modifies the word, life. The two words are I look this up very carefully and I find that where the Bible says hath everlasting life or hath eternal life, it's exactly the same word in the lips of Jesus or from the pen of Paul or John.

So, I don't know why our translators in one verse said eternal life and, in another verse, said everlasting life, unless it's for euphony. There is such a thing, you know, as language that's musical and there would be places where the word eternal life wouldn't fit in musically, so they changed it to everlasting, since everlasting and eternal mean the same thing in English and the original means the same thing in Greek, so that if we say eternal or everlasting life, I don't think that there is any difference.

Bible teachers gain reputations for making distinctions where there are none and laboring those distinctions for 45 minutes. But there's no distinction here, so let's accept this as the fact and any Greek scholar or any lexicon will show you that eternal and everlasting is the same in the original and of course they are synonymous in English.

Well, I started to say that the Bible appears to contradict itself here, and in this it does appear, I say, to contradict itself. This has been charged against your humble servant a few times, dating way back to my early ministry. I remember I was very badly hurt because a member of my church, a rather important man, told me that I contradicted myself in my preaching and that bothered me at the time, but it doesn't bother me anymore.

In fact, it could, in a way, sort of puff you up a little to say that, because you know, a man said that a foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds, adored by little politicians, philosophers, and divines. And this idea that always you ought to keep saying the same thing and become, get in bondage to one line of thought, it isn't scriptural because, you see, the truth is so vast and so many-faceted that it can rarely be stated in one proposition.

That was why when the devil said, it is written, Jesus said, again it is written. If He had listened to, it is written; if Jesus had been a textualist, He'd have turned those stones into bread. If He had been a textualist, He'd have jumped off that tower. If He had been in bondage to the words of some of my brethren now, He would certainly have played straight into the hands of the devil for fear of contradicting Himself.

But the fact is, truth is so vast that it can rarely be stated in a single proposition. And a single proposition usually is false in that it overstates the thing. Let's remember this, that truth is a declaration plus what seems like a contrary declaration and then a getting together of the two. In philosophy they call it thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. Those are hard words when you list them. But a thesis is something that you state. The antithesis or the antithesis is a contrary of that. Then, the synthesis is the getting of the two together, and there's where the truth lies.

Now, that's always so in the Bible. But you know, people, our minds are like rings. We get a hold of the truth, and we get a childish desire to close the ring and weld it. And as soon as we close it and weld it, we never get any larger, never get any larger.

A Baptist preacher one time stood white-faced with anger when he heard a man talking, and he said to me, why, he said, that man claims he changed his mind about something, opinion he had about the Bible. Why, he said, I haven't changed my mind about a single thing in ten years. Now a man actually said that to me, brother. He had welded his little mind shut, and it was so small you couldn't have got it on your finger, I'm sure. Take a

baby finger to get that little mind on there if it was a ring. We insist upon closing our minds and welding them shut, and they never grow after that.

You see, we can have a mind like a ring or like a horseshoe. A horseshoe stays open, and as long as it stays open, it can expand. But as soon as it's welded shut, it can't get any larger. There we have it.

Now, the problem with us is that we get a hold of a truth, and then we consider that truth to be all there is to it, close our minds and weld it, and then turn our backs on anybody that says anything different. Where the fact is that there always ought to be another passage somewhere found that seems to contradict it, you know, if we're going to get at the facts.

Now it's like this. God's sovereignty, for instance. One man says, I believe in God's sovereignty. So, he closes his mind and welds it shut, and he believes in God's sovereignty. Another man stands up boldly and says, I believe in man's free will, and he closes the ring and welds it shut, and the two men turn their backs on each other and walk away and build two churches. One dedicated to the little ring, I believe in God's sovereignty. The other dedicated to the little ring, I believe in man's free will.

But the wise Christian takes thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. And the wise Christian says, now just a minute, isn't it possible that we can take both of those and rise above them and look down on them and see that they're both right and get a third truth that's bigger than both of them? But you can't get people to do that. We'd rather build churches and be known as founders of something. So one fellow has, he's the God's sovereignty man.

I was talking rather in fun to Brother Knighton up here in the study. We were looking at a certain hymnal of a certain church, and it happened to be a hymn that I love very much, the hymn that the trio sang last Sunday night. And I said, look here. They actually, this particular hymn book is a strongly Calvinistic hymn book, being of a strongly Calvinistic organization, which does not believe, or at least not supposed to believe, I think some of them are better than their doctrine, but they're not supposed to believe that Christ died for everybody, only for the elect.

And one of the verses, one of the stanzas that Zinzendorf wrote, and Wesley translated, says this, Lord, I believe we're sinners more than sands upon the ocean shore. Thou hast for all a ransom paid. Thou hast a full salvation or full atonement made.

You know, they skipped that one. They actually skipped it. They didn't put that one in. Now, it could have been they didn't have room for it, but knowing humanity, knowing humanity, I think I know why they skipped it. Because they say Jesus died only for the elect, not for everybody.

And Wesley said, Lord, I believe we're sinners more than sand upon the ocean shore. Thou hast for all a ransom paid. Thou hast for all atonement made. They couldn't take that, so they closed their ring and shut that verse out. But I believe that verse. I believe that stanza with all my heart.

Well, you see, now I want to present two propositions from the Scripture that seem to contradict each other. John 5:24, he that heareth My words and believeth on Him that sent Me hath everlasting life. Now that's there, isn't it? Hath everlasting life in the present tense. John 6:47 says, verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on Me hath everlasting life. John 5:12 says, he that hath the Son hath life.

Now there I have three verses of Scripture, and these three verses of scripture establish the thesis. Eternal life is the present possession of all true Christians. Now there we have the proposition with the proof texts. The true Christian has eternal life. He that hath my words, heareth my words and believeth on me hath eternal life. He that believeth on me hath everlasting life. Now there we have it. We don't have to explain those verses. They're there and they establish the proposition that eternal life is the present possession of Christians.

But you know, there are some church people that teach that eternal life is future and that you do not have it now, you'll have it then; you'll get it then. Well, shall we close the ring and reject everybody that teaches anything else but this? We have one thesis; eternal life is the present possession of Christians.

Now I want to read you some more passages. Matthew 25:46. Then shall the righteous go away into eternal life. That's future. Then this passage, where do I find it here? Luke 20:35, 36. Listen to this. But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world and the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage, neither can they die anymore for they are equal unto the angels. For they are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection. There is a life which is future. It is something that we are to attain or attain unto in the day ahead. Luke 18:29,30. There is no man that hath left house; oh, and then He says, or property and husband, wife, children, anything. He names everything we can leave.

For the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time and in the world to come, life everlasting. Then Romans 2, 7. He says to them who by patient continuance and well-doing seek for glory and immortality, they shall have eternal life. Galatians 6, 8 says, he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. Now, that establishes the proposition that eternal life is the future possession of the Christian. So, there we have thesis, antithesis.

Now what do we do? Throw up by our hands and say the Bible contradicts itself. I don't know what to believe. I don't know what church to join. Then go get drunk. Shall we just give it all up and say a religion such a confusion that I know nothing to do, only go out and live, eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die. Well, that's the way foolish people do. So, we close our minds on one ring or the other.

But there is a second thing we can do. We can rise above both of these and look down on them and see them in their perspective and see that instead of their contradicting each other, they complement each other, supplement each other, and explain each other.

Now, let's look at the synthesis. The thesis is, the Christian has eternal life now. The contradictory thesis is, that the Christian lives in hope of eternal life. The synthesis, that is the truth, is that eternal life is the experience, is to experience God in the soul. John

17:3, this is eternal life, that they might know, that is, experience Thee, the only true God in Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent. And it is therefore a present possession.

And we possess this eternal life now in this world, in a state and world of death. Eternal life grows here in the bosom of redeemed men, surrounded by death everywhere. For the world is asleep, says John, in the lap of wickedness, and all is death around about us. And the Bible tells us that men are dead in trespasses and sins and that they lie in the depth of iniquity and wickedness and in bondage. Now in the midst of all this mortality and death and bondage and wickedness, there are some who have eternal life, now, as a possession. For it is to know God and to know his Son, Jesus Christ.

But further, eternal life is also a future state. It is the kingdom of the blessed. It is where death is banished forever. It is where the Triune God is visibly present.

It is where men shall look on the face of God and with no death present and without the graveyards and the bones and the mortuaries and the undertakers and the hospitals and the ambulances and the doctors and pain and woe and old age and death. We are to look upon the face of God, the first time in human history, look upon the face of God. For it's written, now He dwelleth in light unapproachable, to which no man can come or ever is able to come and nor can see him.

But then they are going to see Him, says the book of Revelation, and look on His face. That is an expansion of eternal life. Now we have eternal life in our bosoms. Then we will dwell in eternal life. Now we have, as it were, the little diamond of eternal light set in our heart. Then we shall dwell in a mansion of diamonds. Now we have a little bit of the blue sky of eternal life to gaze upon like a prisoner looking at the blue sky through a narrow window. Then there will be so much of it and we'll be surrounded in it and we'll swim in it and fly in it and live in it. Eternal life. We live in hope of eternal life, says Paul.

So, you see, my friends, the Bible doesn't really contradict itself. It simply states a proposition. Then it states another proposition. And it gives us credit for having too much sense to get out on either end of the log and say, I believe this, and I believe this. The most pitiful thing I know is to see two saints sitting on the same log with their back to each other who won't speak. One of them out on the end that says eternal life now. The other one out on the end that says hope of eternal life. If they would just get off that log and get a little perspective, they would see that both of those facts are true.

A Christian has eternal life now, but he doesn't have all the eternal life there is now. He has the life of God in his soul, for Peter says that we have the very nature of God in our souls. That a Christian has now. So, when you hear a man in the mission tell the poor fellows from Skid Row, believe in Jesus Christ and you'll have eternal life, they're telling the truth. When you hear the serious Bible expositor saying we're living in hope of eternal life to come, he's telling the truth too. Only what they mean is that the believer gets eternal life now as a, what does Paul call it, foretaste, an earnest; and that earnest which we have now is the beginning.

It's like this, it's like this. Suppose that I were a rich man. That's a supposition that'll really strain your brain bad, but suppose that I were a rich man.

And suppose that I had a couple of million dollars salted away down here in the Continental Bank. And I'd say to a son, I only had one, that's another supposition. And I'd say, son, you're going to have this. I'm not going to be around long. I already begin to feel the tug of mother nature and I'll be leaving it, and I can't use it and I want you to have it. Here's \$10,000 to start. See if you can invest that well. See what you can do with it. I'd like to have the pleasure of seeing what you can do with it while I'm around. So I give him \$10,000. But there's still two million salted away and he says, here's the will.

And he talks to his friend, and he says, my dad has just made me rich. I have money. I have money. Then the next breath he says, I'm in my father's will. And when he dies, I'll have money. And they say, well, now just a minute, you're contradicting yourself. Now you say you have money. Now you say you're going to have it. Now you say your father's already given it to you. And the next breath you say you're waiting on it. Which is true. Both are true.

And why should, why should they start two churches over that? But if they get together on that and understand what they mean. Now I say I have eternal life, thank God. And then the next breath, I say the gospel, which is in hope of eternal life. And people say, oh, there he goes again. Can't understand the man. He contradicts himself.

There's no contradiction there, my brethren. It is simply that you got to know what you mean. He has given us now a little earnest of what we're to have, but the great glorious inheritance waits for us there. So, that's why the Bible often talks about looking for eternal life and hoping unto eternal life. The righteous shall go away into eternal life, but eternal life is in the righteous now. The righteous has eternal life in Him, but he's living in a world of death. Then he'll not only have eternal life in him, but he'll move into eternal life.

Well, I hope that that's clear and that we'll ask God to help us not to rule each other out, and not to close our minds. Keep your mind open. I know all the cracks that have been made about the open mind. They say that all these flies get into open vessels, and they have all sorts of things. That's to excuse the fellow who hasn't got moral courage enough to say, I don't know.

But when the Lord lays down a fact, believe that fact. When the Lord lays down another fact that seems to contradict it, believe that fact. For they're both true. And in a short time, you'll see a third truth that'll show how they both fit into each other.

So, we Christians have eternal life. Now that's the thesis. We look forward to eternal life and that's the contradictory thesis. But the synthesis is that that eternal life has two meanings. It has the meaning of what we have now. It has the meaning of what we're going to have.

If any of you Christians think that what you have now is all God can do for you, you're going to have to rethink this whole deal. Because the happiest Christian and the most holy Christian that ever lived is only a beginner. He's just in the kindergarten, that's all. He's just playing on the shore with a sandbucket. There's yet an ocean lying before him, an ocean of glorious truth and an ocean of riches which Christ has ready for him, yonder. So that eternal life which Paul talks about, says, in hope of eternal life. So, Paul

didn't contradict John after all. It is that toward which we look, and the hope of the church.

I had the pleasure last night, indeed, the pleasure last night of giving a talk to a Methodist church. Methodists they were, old Methodists. Some of those old Methodists. And I started to speak. They all sat there, and they said, who's this whippersnapper? And I wondered if I was going to get past their guard. And then slowly, one at a time, I saw them melt up and their faces begin to lighten up. And pretty soon I was preaching to those old Methodists. Because I can quote about as much Methodism as any man who isn't a Methodist, there is. And we Methodists got along beautifully well.

And I told them that we were sharers in a common hope. And they weren't going to make any charts about it, nor fit Mussolini in. And I don't know what to do with Khrushchev. He'd probably drink himself to death one of these days. But I don't know what to do with all of this, this, all of this chirography and all that. Is that what you call making map making? I don't even try to remember where any country is anymore. I quit 10 years ago. Because about the time I get it memorized, somebody comes in, takes it over and changes his name. You don't know what anything is doing anymore, much.

But there is a God who has appointed the nations and who rules in the affairs of men. And you know what I believe? I believe that just as one time God looked down and saw some men busy building a tower. They were building a tower. God said, I've had enough of that. And he just went down and just made up the whole affair. Leveled their tower and confused their languages and said, I've had enough.

Do you know what I think? I may be wrong, but I think one of these days God's going to look down and see all this hardware circulating around up there reflecting the light and beep, beep, beep, beeping. And God's going to say, I've had enough of that. And he's just going to wipe the whole mess out. I hope so. For when He does it, that will be what we're looking for, the coming again of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. Not the eternal life we have now, but that vaster, deeper, grander eternal life which we'll have when we arrive there.

Oh, sweet and blessed country, the hope of God's elect. Oh, sweet and blessed country that eager hearts expect. Jesus in mercy bring us to that dear land of rest Who art with God the Father and Spirit ever blessed. Oh, sweet and blessed country, shall I ever see thy face? Oh, sweet and blessed country, shall I ever win thy grace? I have the hope within me to comfort and to bless. Shall I ever win the place itself? Oh, tell me, tell me, yes.

Then the old brother closes his hymn with a shout, exalt, oh, dust and ashes. The Lord shall be thy part, His only, His forever thou shalt be and art. That was the answer. Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes. An everlasting, eternal, yes. That sweet and blessed country under which we look, the eternal life, which is to come, which is one with the eternal life we have dwelling in our bosoms. As when the little lagoon suddenly fleshes over and joins the ocean, so all the little lagoons we call eternal life in men down here, deepest calling unto deep at the noise of God's waterspouts.

And one of these times, all the little lagoons that we call Christians, little puddles of eternal life, so to speak, shall suddenly burst over their dikes and rush out to meet that great vast ocean of eternal life, which we call God. That's what we hope for. So Paul says, unto the hope of eternal life, and he wasn't contradicting John, he was just explaining John. Amen? Thank the Lord.