

Sermon #112 — John's Gospel

Title: **“THIS IS LIFE ETERNAL!”**

Text: John 17:3

Date: Sunday Morning — February 27, 2011

Tape: *John #112*

Subject: *Eternal Life*

Reading: *1 John 5:1-21*

Introduction:

When Moses approached the burning bush, the Lord God said to him, “*Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground*” (Exodus 3:6). That is exactly how I feel every time I read, or attempt to preach from, the 17th chapter of John. This is The Lord’s Prayer, the intercessory prayer of our great High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ. As He anticipated His death upon the cross, the glorious consummation of His obedience to God as our Substitute, these are the words He spake to God the Father on our behalf.

“Father, the hour is come” – The hour He is talking about is the hour of His death, the hour of our redemption, the hour for which the world was made.

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“Glorify Thy Son” – He elaborates on this verse 5. *“Glorify Thou Me with thine Ownself, with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was.”* Exalt Me to Your throne; give Me the dominion over all things; magnify Me as Lord over all and King forever; give Me the pre-eminence!

“That Thy Son also may glorify Thee” – Give Me the rule of the world as the Mediator of My people, as their Head and Representative, that I may save all the people of Your love all elect sinners, for the everlasting praise, honor and glory of Your name. We know this is the meaning of verse 1 because he says so in verse 2.

“As Thou hast given Him power over all flesh” – This power was given to Christ our Surety in the covenant of grace as the result of His pledged obedience unto death. When He finished the work of redemption and ascended back into heaven, the Triune Jehovah turned over to Him, the God-man, our Redeemer, the reins of the universe, **“power over all flesh!”**

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“That He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him.” The purpose of Christ’s exaltation, power and dominion is that He might, by the power of His omnipotent grace, give eternal life, to chosen sinners, redeemed by His blood.

Now, read verse 3 — *“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!”** There is my subject I want to talk to you about **Eternal Life**.

BEGINS HERE

When we preach about eternal life, **many people think we are talking about heaven**. We are! But eternal life means much more. Eternal life begins right here on earth. It begins as soon as a person is born again. When you trust Christ you receive from Him the same life that you shall have throughout eternity, — His life. It is **“Christ in you, the Hope of Glory!”**

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The life of a new born child of God, who has just a moment ago begun to call upon the name of the Lord, is the very same life that is possessed by Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Elijah, who have been in heaven for thousand of years! **Eternal life is like a mighty river.** It deepens and widens as it flows. But it is the same river which began when Christ, the Water of Life, first sprang up in your soul. **We “grow in grace,”** but you’ve got to have life to grow! **“We see through a glass darkly:”** but we do see! And you’ve got to have life to see. It is true **we only “know in part;”** but we do know! And you’ve got to have life to know.

When the believer dies, he does not suddenly enter into a new life. Death simply rids us of this cumbersome body of flesh, the body of sin, the old nature, which hampers our enjoyment of life. When we drop this body of flesh, then we shall fully enjoy eternal life, the life of Christ imparted to us in the new birth (Romans 7:24-25). **I want us to see this.** – Eternal life begins here, in the new birth. It is not something awaiting us in heaven. It is *“Christ in you!”* **To have eternal life is to be made by the**

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grace of God a “partaker of the Divine nature.” It is to have Christ formed in you!

THE FATHER’S GIFT

This eternal life is **the gift of God the Father!** — *“The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord”* (Romans 6:23). *“This is the record that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son”* (1 John 5:11).

- We were born in spiritual death.
- We deserve eternal death.
- But God has decreed to give chosen sinners eternal life!

THE SON’S PURCHASE

This eternal life is **the purchase of God the Son!** — *“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). — *“He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him”* (John 3:36).

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Our Savior said, “*I am come that they might have life!*” (John 10:10). — “*Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit*” (1 Peter 3:18).

“Living, He loved me,
Dying, He saved me,
Buried, He carried my sins far away,
Rising, He justified freely forever!”

THE SPIRIT’S WORK

This eternal life is **the work of God the Holy Spirit**. — “*It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing*” (John 6:63). Eternal life is bestowed upon helpless, dead sinners by the sovereign, irresistible work of God the Holy Spirit (John 1:11-13; 3:3-8).

(John 1:11-13) “He came unto his own, and his own received him not. 12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, [even] to them that believe on

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his name: 13 Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”

(John 3:3-8) “Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. 4 Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother’s womb, and be born? 5 Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and [of] the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. 6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7 Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. 8 The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.”

GIVEN TO GOD’S ELECT

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This eternal life, the gift of the Father, the purchase of the Son, the work of the Spirit, is **given by Christ to all those the Father gave to Him in the everlasting covenant of grace**. Eternal life is the gift of the Triune God to His elect.

Look at **John 17:2** again – “*Thou hast given Him power over all flesh.*” Our Savior is not a beggar, waiting for you to let Him come into your heart! He is the almighty, sovereign King of kings and Lord of lords! He is not in your hands. You’re in His hands! He says, “*All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth!*” (Matthew 28:18). — “*That He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him!*”

- There are many who have been given to Christ from eternity, whom He must and will save (John 6:37-40).
- All whom Christ had given to Him in eternity He will give eternal life in time (John 10:24-28).
- The evidence and proof of a person’s election in eternity is the gift of eternal life in time (1 Thessalonians 1:4-5; Acts 13:48).

Illustrations: *Ezekiel’s Infant* (Ezekiel 16).

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The Valley of Dry Bones (Ezekiel 37).

The Resurrection of Lazarus (John 11).

Now, look at our Lord’s words in John 17:3 – “*And this is life eternal.*” **What is it? What is eternal life? Can it be defined? Can it be described?** Listen: – “*This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent.*”

Proposition: Eternal life is the knowledge of God in Christ. – Let me see if I can show you what that means.

Divisions: Two Statements and a Question...

1. Eternal life is to know the Lord God, the only true God.
2. Eternal life is to know God as He is revealed in Christ.
3. How do sinners get this eternal life, this knowledge of God in Christ?

KNOWING GOD

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First, eternal life is to know the Lord God, the only true God. — Before Adam sinned, he knew God. He walked in God’s presence and talked with God, as a man talks with his own familiar friend. But when he fell, Adam lost everything!

- Life!
- Righteousness!
- Light!
- The Knowledge of God!
- Peace!

No man by nature knows or can know God. Our Lord said, *“No man knoweth the Father, save the Son and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him”* (Matthew 11:21). — *“Ye neither know me, nor my Father”* (John 8:19). All men think they know God, know all about God; but no man by nature knows God!

Yet, man must have a god. As a dog must have a master, so man must have a god; and he will find a god of some kind. Man’s ignorance of God has led him into every imaginable form of idolatry and superstition. There is hardly a creature, a power, or

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an element of nature that man has not worshiped as god! All men by nature “*worship and serve the creature more than the Creation*” (Romans 1:25).

The more educated and brilliant a man is the more ridiculous and base is his idolatry – (Acts 17:22-23 – “*To the Unknown God!*”)

Man’s ignorance of God is such that he always rejects light and chooses darkness, and turns from the truth of God to vain philosophy, heathen superstition and religious tradition. — Did not our Savior tell the Pharisees this? – “*I am come in My Father’s name, and ye receive Me not: if another come in his own name, him ye will receive*” (John 5:43). — “*My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord*” (Isaiah 55:8).

The wisdom of God is foolishness to man — “*There is a way which seemeth right unto a man,*” and he pursues it with all his heart, “*But the end thereof are the ways of death*” (Proverbs 14:2)

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What is it to know the only true God? — I mean to know Him!

- Knowing God is not just having a god – Everybody has a god. Our Lord says, eternal life is knowing the **only true God!**
- Knowing God is not just believing that there is a God. – Whether they acknowledge it or not, everybody believes that there is a God.

To Know God, the only true God is to know Him as God. – Who is God?

- He is the great, infinite, invisible, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, eternal Jehovah, who made heaven and earth (Isaiah 45:12).
- He is God, the incomprehensible Trinity (1 John 5:7).

Spurgeon said, “I would not worship a god that I could fully understand...If I could put my religion in my pocket, like a box of lozenges, I should soon suck it all away!” There is in God an infinite depth of mystery, an infinite height of wonder, and infinite wideness of fullness that no man can comprehend.

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- He is God who “*upholds all things by the Word of his power!*”
- He is God “*who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will!*”
- He is God “*in whom we live, and move, and have our being!*”
- He is God who reigns everywhere, over all things, “*who doeth according to his will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth,*” whose will and power no man can resist!

To know the only true God is to know Him as my God! The God I have just described is God to me!

- God is great.
- God is sovereign
- God is good.
- God is holy.
- God is just.
- And, blessed be His name, God is mine!

I bow before His throne. I am aware of His presence. I worship Him with reverence and awe. I believe

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Him. I trust His Word and love His law. I trust His Son.

To know the only true God is to know Him as my Father! — “*We have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Father! Father!*” (Romans 8:15). We pray to “*our Father which art in heaven*” (Matthew 6:9).

My Father is One whom I both trust and obey, One whom I both love and fear! **I am conscious of...**

- His Power and His Peace!
- His Righteousness and His Redemption!
- His Justice and His Mercy!

If God almighty is my Father, all is well, always!

- You may strip me, but I’ll still be clothed in His righteousness.
- You may put me in prison, but I’ll still be free in Christ!
- You may pluck out my eyes, but I’ll still see His glory!

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- You may cut out my tongue, but I’ll still sing His praise!
- You may forsake me, but I’m never alone!
- I may be sick in body, but it is well with my soul!
- I may be pressed under the load of a thousand cares, but all will work together for my good!
- I may this moment be at death’s door, but it will lead me into His presence!

To know the only true God is to have a life worth living.

- Before I knew Him, I cursed the day of my birth, but now I thank Him for a life to live!
- Before I knew Him, I felt like a galley slave pulling his oars for no reason, with no future; but knowing Him I have a reason for life and see a reason for every event in life.
- If I didn’t know God, I would be in utter confusion regarding life and death, heaven and hell, justice and mercy; but in Christ I see His wisdom in all things.

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- If I didn’t know God, I would tremble at the prospect of old age, sickness and death; but knowing Him I face these realities with peace.
- If I didn’t know God, there would be no joy for today, no satisfaction with yesterday, and no hope for tomorrow.

To those who do not know God the future is a blank. They call themselves “agnostics:” and they name themselves well. An agnostic is one who knows nothing! But the man who knows God knows Him *“of whom, through whom, and to whom are all things!”*

“And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent!”

KNOWING GOD IN CHRIST

Second, eternal life is to know the only true God, as He is revealed in Jesus Christ. Eternal life is knowing God in Christ. Many foolishly talk about knowing God in many mysterious ways, in what they

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call, “mystical, spiritual experiences.” But that is all nonsense.

To know God apart from Christ would not be life eternal, for **God apart from Christ is an infinitely holy being, whose law I have broken!**

- He could not bless me, whose law I have violated.
- He could not walk with me, for I am unclean.
- He could not smile upon me in my sin.
- But Christ is my Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification and Redemption. – I am “*accepted in the Beloved!*”

It would be death, not eternal life, to know God apart from Christ, Because **the holy, just Lord God must punish sin!** He will “*in no wise clear the guilty!*” — “*The soul that sinneth, it shall die!*”

- But **Isaiah 53:5-6** tells me that Christ paid for all my sins.
- **Hebrews 9:26** tells me that He put them all away.

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- **Romans 8:32-34** tells me that I am justified and shall never come into condemnation!

It would not be life to know God apart from Christ, for without Christ **my body would rot in the grave and never rise; I must forever die!** — *“If Christ be not raised, our preaching is vain...your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.”* (1 Corinthians 15:14, 17). But because He lives we shall live also (John 14:1-3).

(John 14:1-3) “Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. 2 In my Father’s house are many mansions: if [it were] not [so], I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, [there] ye may be also.”

“This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent!”

A QUESTION

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Third, let me spend the rest of my time addressing a very practical question. — **How do sinners get this eternal life, this blessed, living knowledge of God in Christ?**

- You don't get it by nature, but by grace!
- Not by birth, but by new birth!
- Not by your will, but by God's will
- Not by your works, but by God's work!

Eternal life is the gift of God!

Here are three things that are essential. Apart from these three things no sinner will ever have eternal life.

1. **Eternal life must be implanted by grace.**

As God breathed life into Adam's nostrils and made him a living soul, so God the Holy Spirit must breathe into you the breath of eternal life (John 3:8; Ezekiel 16:8).

2. **Eternal life must be revealed by the Holy Spirit.**

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God the Holy Spirit must show you the things of Christ; no one else can!

- Your Sin, the Cause of Death!
- Christ Blood, the Price of Life!

3. Eternal life must be received by faith in Jesus Christ.

I do not say that faith is, in any way, the cause of life. Faith is the result of life. I do not say, if you believe you will live. But I do say, if you live you believe. If you do not trust Christ, you do not have eternal life; you are yet in the gall of bitterness, dead in trespasses and in sin; and the wrath of God is upon you! — *“He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him”* (John 3:36).

- **To believe on the Lord Jesus Christ is to realize the glory of His Person!** — *“God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself!”* God was and is that Man who died at Calvary! In him God and man are reconciled!

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- **To believe on the Lord Jesus Christ is to trust the efficacy of His blood!** — *“The blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, cleanseth us from all sin!”* (See – 1 Peter 1:18-20).

(1 Peter 1:18-20) “Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, [as] silver and gold, from your vain conversation [received] by tradition from your fathers; 19 But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: 20 Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you.”

- **To believe on the Lord Jesus Christ is to rest in the merit of His righteousness** (Jeremiah 23:6).

“Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness,
My beauty are, my glorious dress,
Midst flaming worlds in these arrayed,
With joy shall I lift up my head!”

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“With His spotless garments on
I am as holy as God’s own Son!”

- **To believe on the Lord Jesus Christ is to rely upon the power of His intercession!** — *“He is able to save to the uttermost all them that come to God by him”* (Hebrews 7:25).
- **To believe on the Lord Jesus Christ is to bow to His sovereign rule as your Lord!** — *“Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?”*

“This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God and Jesus Christ, whom thou has sent!”

Amen.