

Salvation- Eternal Life

What truly is the reward to being a Christian? What makes you get up every day and say you are proud to be a Christian and, why you want to follow in the Lord's footsteps? What really is the light at the end of the tunnel? For many of us, the answer is Salvation- Eternal Life. What really does Salvation mean and can we achieve eternal life in this life as humans? This chapter explores the myths and the truth behind Eternal life.

I took a lot of inspiration for this chapter from the writings of Andrew Wommack ministries. He was posed the problem differently? Someone once asked him "If you only had one opportunity to minister to a person, what would you teach?" "I would share the meaning of true eternal life" was his answer.

So what really does the Bible teach to us about eternal life?- Every one turns to **John 3:16** for the answer- **"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life"**. Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life. **John 5:24**. Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him. **John 3:36**.

Notice John deliberately says "has eternal life" in the present tense. Yes Eternal life is not something in the distant future or one that you get at death. Eternal life starts NOW. Now, when you start believing Christ and surrender your life to Him. It has to be felt by each one of us when we live our lives for Christ daily. And isn't that a marvellous feeling to be granted with eternal life? Knowing this truth fundamentally changes all our equation on pain, suffering, loss, evil or any other fear on earth for that matter. We, are chosen by him to have Eternal life and the Holy Spirit to reside within us in this life as humans. So how joyful and strong and courageous should be our hearts and minds as true followers of Christ. If we really haven't reached that maturity in thought as Christians, well, we are indeed waiting for Salvation. It is not sure that it would be automatically granted at Death though. So are we truly working and striving for Salvation when we live our daily lives? Or are we waiting for it without knowing that we already have the gift of eternal life once we believe!

The answer again is simple like many of the other Plain Truths we have been exploring- 'Just Believe' - That's the simple command from our Lord- **"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**

What Andrew Wommack says in the following passage got me sitting up and realising a whole lot that I never realised before. “Many people have mistakenly thought that the goal of salvation is the forgiveness of sin to avoid hell. That’s not what John 3:16 is saying. Sure, not perishing in hell is an important part of what Jesus came to do. He accomplished that by paying the debt for all our sins, past, present, and even the ones we haven’t committed yet. If that’s all there is to salvation, that’s more than any of us deserve, and it would still be worth preaching. But salvation is much, much more than getting our sins forgiven so we can go to heaven instead of hell. Let me say it this way. If all you did was ask Jesus to forgive your sins so you wouldn’t perish in hell, then you are missing out on eternal life. Sin was a barrier that stood between us and a holy God. It had to be removed. That’s exactly what Jesus did, and He did it well. Sin is no longer standing between God and man.

On the other hand, Eternal life is not merely “Forgiveness of our sins”. God has already accomplished that for us on the cross once and for all. On the other hand Eternal life is what one receives through His Grace and in knowing Him. And the Bible defines exactly how you gain it-**“And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.” John 17:3** It is about “knowing Jesus Christ- an intimate, close, personal relationship with God. Knowing that we are forgiven of all our sins is liberating indeed. But that’s not the end. Knowing that you can attain salvation and eternal life by believing and knowing Jesus Christ is awesome. We have many people who have come to the Lord and received the forgiveness of their sins, but they are saved and stuck. They are just waiting for heaven so they can really start living. That is missing the main point of salvation. Eternal life starts now, when you Believe!

He will render to each one according to his works: to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, he will give eternal life; but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury. Romans 2:6-8. God makes this promise to us through Jesus Christ. Eternal life is for us if we follow his command and know Him and live our lives in Him. **And this is the promise that he made to us—eternal life. 1 John 2:25. I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life. 1 John 5:13. Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. John 6:47.** I guess we don’t need more affirmation than all of this.

So God was very clear in saying “how and when” we get Eternal Life. **“Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?” John 11:25-26.** Yes, Do we really believe this? If we did wouldn’t all of us who think we

truly believe in the Lord reveal the signs of Eternal Life and Salvation. How blessed are we and yet we refuse to accept or believe that.

So how do we understand what eternal life feels like and what is it really? What are the signs of receiving the gift of salvation from the Lord? Many have written about this. But let's see what the Bible says!

When you are saved, or born again, you experience a spiritual transformation, a total change of heart. To be born again is to be saved. To have eternal life! **“Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.” (John 3:3). ‘I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, “You must be born again” (John 3: 5-7).** The true transformation we attain when we believe and we really receive the Holy Spirit is what gives eternal life. The moment that we receive Christ as Savior, the Holy Spirit comes to live in our hearts. Our body becomes the temple of the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit helps us live the Christian life. The Holy Spirit sees everything that goes on. He knows what goes on in our hearts. He knows what goes on in our minds. Nothing is hidden from Him. And the Holy Spirit is eternal. **Just think how much more the blood of Christ will purify our consciences from sinful deeds so that we can worship the living God. For by the power of the eternal Spirit, Christ offered himself to God as a perfect sacrifice for our sins. Hebrews 9:14.** We gain eternal life by conforming more to the image of Jesus Christ, and it is the Holy Spirit who helps us in this growing process, in the following ways as Billy Graham and others put it:

Conviction of Sin- **“And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment” (John 16:8).** The Holy Spirit uses a mother's prayers, a tragic experience, a pastor's sermon or some other experience to convict us of sin and of our need to turn our lives over to Jesus Christ. He points to us and says, “You are a sinner. You need to repent.” Without that work we could never have our sins forgiven. We could never be saved. We could never go to Heaven.

New Life- Second, the Holy Spirit gives new life. The Bible says that we are dead in sins and trespasses. Our spirit within us, made in the image of God, is dead toward God. Mankind needs life. All have sinned. Therefore, all are dead toward God. The Holy Spirit gives us new life in Jesus Christ. **Jesus said, “Unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3).** You must be born again. And the Holy Spirit is the One who does the work of making you a born-again person. It is a supernatural act. **Our good works and all the good things that we have done are not going to save us. We are saved by the mercy of God, by**

the grace of God. It is something I didn't earn, something I didn't work for. It is the gift of God, the gift of salvation. **"Not by works of righteousness which we have done but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:5)**

Indwelling Spirit- The Bible says, **"Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?" (1 Corinthians 3:16)**. So the holy Spirit not only gives us a new life but dwells with in each one of us who believes in Jesus Christ. Through repentance, he wipes out what was dirty in us and allows us to bear good fruit. As we allow him to continue nourishing that fruit, we grow to resemble Jesus more. **"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law" (Galatians 5:22-23)**. That's how a person with eternal life and saved by the Lord, is seen by the world. He makes us more like Christ. The Holy Spirit teaches and reveals the meaning of Scripture to Christians the way Jesus would. **"But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you" (John 14:26)**.

Power to Serve Christ- The Holy Spirit gives you power to serve Christ. **"You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me" (Acts 1:8)**. The transformation is not merely our reward but something to share with the world and God equips us through the Holy Spirit residing in us. A new found courage, purpose and goal in life. If we draw near to the Holy Spirit, He will place love in our hearts for our brothers and sisters and we will be compelled to unite. This is the unity we need in the body of Christ today.

So salvation and eternal life is not received just at a point in time but over time and as a process- as we receive the Holy Spirit and let the Holy Spirit work with and in us. But a true believer will experience and salvation in this life. Now. If we truly believe and receive Jesus Christ into us.

Paul's Letter to the Galatians goes to many length to clarify the central ethos of true Christianity- Salvation is a gift from Christ to us and was given to us if we believe. It is not conformance to rules and regulations or achieved through human effort in being Good. Salvation leads us to lead a good life through Christ...not the other way. Any amount of effort from us as humans will not lead to Salvation. We will explore this in the next chapter.