

ETERNAL LIFE IS OF GOD

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From the beginning of human history men have desired eternal life. Humans have gone about seeking it in their own way. Adam and Eve were looking for it when they sinned. Satan told them, "You will not surely die" (Genesis 3:4). Yet they, and all humans who have ever lived prior to our time, have died (Hebrews 9:27), because eternal life is of God.

In ancient societies such as Babylon and Egypt men believed not only that fleshly works were necessary for eternal life but that eternal life depended on the continued existence of the flesh - that the flesh would somehow share in it. Thus for kings, especially, elaborate preparations were made for burial.

In Babylon and some other societies when a king died his riches were buried with him, also his wives, concubines, and servants, to serve him in the afterlife. Egyptians had similar beliefs and practices. They built elaborate tombs, and mummified the body to preserve it for the *ba* and *ka* (believed by the Egyptians to be spiritual aspects of existence which survived the death of the body, and which visited or inhabited the body after death). All kinds of charms, spells, and amulets were used to ensure eternal life.

A most sacred charm was the scarab heart. The heart was a symbol of what a person was - his emotions and character. The scarab beetle was a symbol of eternal life. The scarab heart charm supposedly made even the heart of an evil person weigh good.

God commanded his people each year to observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Leviticus 23:6). One of the Lessons of unleavened bread is that we do not have in this flesh eternal life. The flesh is doomed to destruction. Leavening in this context represents corruption. Our flesh is corrupt, mortal, and is in the process of perishing (1 Corinthians 15:50; 2 Corinthians 4:16).

There is no way we can save our own lives. Yet, though we cannot save ourselves, eternal life is possible for us, not through corruptible flesh, but through the Spirit of God. It's the same Holy Spirit that was given to the New Covenant Church of God in a special way on the day of Pentecost following Jesus' death and resurrection.

So how may we receive that Spirit, and the Eternal life that goes with It?

God purposes for us eternal life. He offered it to Adam and Eve (Genesis 2:9, 16). But they wanted to have it by means of the flesh. They wanted to acquire it for themselves their own way. Whereas God offered it to them as a gift, but in order to receive the gift he required them to follow his instructions (Genesis 2:17; 3:22-24).

The Tree of life – representing the Holy Spirit – represents God’s attributes of character – his nature planted in us which makes us a spiritual creation patterned after God. "But did He not make them [Adam and Eve] one, Having a remnant of the Spirit? And why one? He seeks godly offspring [Hebrew: seed of God]" (Malachi 2:15).

God created mankind, Adam and Eve, and brought them together as one flesh for the ultimate purpose of reproducing himself, that is, in order to produce seed, or offspring, of God. That's the purpose of your existence, the existence of every human (Revelation 21:6-7).

God wants us to have eternal life (John 3:14-17; 1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9). But there is a way that leads to life and a way that leads to death (Matthew 7:13-14). In giving Adam and Eve a choice he put before them two ways.

The tree of life representing God’s nature showed also that God himself is the way – God is the life – the source of eternal life. The way of eternal life and the source of eternal life as far as human beings are concerned cannot be separated.

"See, I have set before you today **life and good, death and evil**, in that I command you today to love the Lord your God, to walk in His ways, and to **keep His commandments, His statutes, and His judgments**, that you may **live....**"

....

"I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you **life and death**, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live; that you may love the Lord your God, that you may **obey His voice**, and that you may cling to Him, for **He is your life...**" (Deuteronomy 30:15-16, 19-20).

Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6).

Jesus said, in a metaphorical sense, "Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:54). He was not speaking literally of flesh and blood, but of eating and drinking in of his word and Spirit. "It is the Spirit who [or which] gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life" (John 6:63).

We eat and drink of Christ through eating and drinking of his word and his Spirit. If Christ lives in us we have life. If he lives in us, his way, expressed by his words, dwells in us also. "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you.... so you will be My disciples" (John 15:7-8). If Christ’s life is in us, his words are in us, and the fruits of living God’s way are born, but not of ourselves, not of our flesh. "He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5).

Our fleshly bodies are mortal. We cannot inherit immortality through the flesh. "...flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption" (1 Corinthians 15:50). Yet it is natural for man to seek to please his flesh – to follow fleshly impulses, and when his thoughts turn to eternal life – to seek it by fleshly means. Our flesh is unfit for eternal life. It is perishing. It is not suited by character or its nature for eternal life.

Yet it is typical and natural for humans – unless they overcome that tendency – to be consumed with pleasing the flesh, pursuing fleshly desires, making provision for the flesh (Luke 12:16-21). But we are counseled to be mindful of the fact that this life is fleeting (Psalm 90:12; 1 Peter 1:24).

While enjoying life in the proper balance is not wrong, our attention should be centered primarily not on pleasing the flesh – not on this earthly realm, but on the realm which is the abode of those given immortality – the Kingdom of God. "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness..." (Matthew 6:33). "If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth" (Colossians 3:1-2).

Upon initial repentance and baptism we are sealed with the Holy Spirit, given a down payment on eternal life (Ephesians 1:13-14). However, to attain eternal life in its fullness we must continue in the faith (Colossians 1:21-23). To avoid falling we must be growing the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:17-18). Those who overcome in this life will be given eternal life in God's Kingdom (Revelation 2:7).

Therefore we must mortify the fleshly nature and walk after the Spirit. "For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace" (Romans 8:5-6). "And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit" (Galatians 5:24-25). "...he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life" (Galatians 6:8).

It is God's will to give us character fit for life. It is his gift to those who walk after the Spirit (Philippians 2:12-13; Proverbs 16:3; 2 Peter 1:1-11).

Eternal life is what God wants us to have and to seek, but we must realize it does not come from our own flesh, or from our own strength. It is the gift of God to those who walk after the Spirit, who partake of the Spirit of God, who are spiritually minded. Let's allow God to create in us his righteous character so that we may fully attain eternal life in his glorious kingdom.

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