

Does it matter? Does it really matter? After all, Christians live under grace; even if they wanted to, it would avail them nothing to try to *earn* their way into God's heart—to prove themselves to Him. They are in Christ, which means He has done it all for them. Christians are not supposed to *work* at their relationship with God, are they?

Eternal Life

Third in the series

**LIVING
SERIOUSLY**

THIS IS THE FALLACIOUS ARGUMENT made by those who are of the mind that God's economy—His all-encompassing plan for mankind—is only about salvation, only about an individual getting his foot in the door of heaven. This is the argument of those who have their ticket in hand, and are just biding their time till death, when they can get it punched at the Pearly Gates. If that were the case, if the Son of God came down to earth to become flesh and die upon a cross just to dispense a ticket to heaven for those who believe, then the argument might hold up.

But He did not, and it does not.



Many believers, and just about all unbelievers, think of the relationship between earth and heaven as reaching a point where the former ends and the latter begins. *This is my life now, but at some point I will die and cross the threshold into my eternity.* But the truth is that our eternity has already begun, and for the believer it is an eternity with God. The Christian's eternity with Christ does not begin at death; it begins at the moment of conversion, when the Holy Spirit comes in to dwell.

The one who believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself; the one who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has given concerning His Son. And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.

1 John 5:10-13

"Eternal life" is far more than the believer's hope of heaven after death. That eternal life begins the moment the Holy Spirit draws us into a life in Christ. Eternal life with our heavenly Father after death is His promise to us, but participating in that eternal life now is an elective. It is a benefit held out to us, but many choose not to take it as their own.

Think of it this way: Let's say someone gives you a gift of a month-long luxury cruise of the Mediterranean. It is worth many thousands of dollars. You and your spouse will be sailing on the largest, most luxurious cruise ship in the world. The

The expression "eternal life" is to be understood primarily as life which belongs to God. The word "eternal" indicates a definite quality: it is a different life from the old existence typified by hate, lack of love, sin, pain and death. Eternal life does not therefore just begin in the future, it is already the possession of those who have entered upon fellowship with Christ.

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amenities are without parallel; the food will be bountiful and sinfully delicious. On board are offered a boundless list of activities for every interest. The ports of call include such fascinating sights as Alexandria and Cairo in Egypt; the Holy Land and Petra; Istanbul; Athens, Greece; Naples and Rome, Italy; the island of Patmos; Corinth; the Isle of Crete; Monaco; Barcelona, Spain; and Morocco. All your expenses have been paid; all you need do is enjoy.

Then, upon boarding the ship, you spend the next four weeks shut in your cabin. For your meals you consume only

the trunkload of miserable, stale sack lunches you brought on board with you.

That is how many in the family of God live out their days—a bare-bones, Spartan existence all the while surrounded by unimaginable luxury and wealth. Our eternal life in Christ—not just heaven, but the life we are living right now—has been bought and paid for by someone else. Anything we would ever want has been supplied for us. All we have to do is enjoy.

And then we sit in our windowless rooms, nibbling on our meager dry crackers and stale cheese.

Christ, through His death and resurrection, has opened up to us boundless resources and opportunities. His righteousness, His wisdom, His love and compassion, His light and goodness and understanding, His knowledge of the Father, the world, the universe—all are available to us! We are to *delight* ourselves in Him, revel in Him; like Mary, we are to sit at His feet and take in everything He has to give us.

This is eternal life. And it is how Jesus Himself defined it just moments before His arrest.

Jesus spoke these things; and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You, even as You gave Him authority over all flesh, that to all whom You have given Him, He may give eternal life. This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent."

John 17:1-3

Our eternal life is to be spent knowing God, and knowing His Son, Jesus Christ. That is to be the believer's occupation and deepest desire.

