

*You Have Eternal Life** (direct quote from 1 John 5:13 & John 5:39)

1 John 5:13, John 5:39, 17:3, 5:24, 26

1 John 5:13

*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**.*

John 5:39

³⁹ *You examine the Scriptures because you think that in them **you have eternal life**; and it is those very Scriptures that testify about Me;*

John 3:16

¹⁶ *“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish, but **have eternal life**.*

John 17:3

*And this is eternal life, that they may **know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent**.*

John 5:24

*“Truly, truly, I say to you, **the one who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life**, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.*

John 5:26

²⁶ *For just as the Father has life in Himself, so He gave to **the Son also to have life in Himself**;*

Introduction

Before we talk about eternal life, we must understand what eternity is like. How would you explain to someone what eternity is like? Pastor Chuck Swindoll explains as follows— *“If you have a steel ball, solid steel, the size of this earth, 25,000 miles in circumference, and every one million years a little sparrow would be released to land on that ball to sharpen his beak and fly away only to come back another million years later and begin again, by the time he would have worn that ball down to the size of a BB, eternity would have just begun.”* ---(Charles R. Swindoll, *Swindoll’s Ultimate Book of Illustrations & Quotes*, Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, 1998, p. 183)

With that in mind, let’s think about the following questions: What is eternal life? Does everyone have it? Do I have it? If not, how do I have it?

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So, what is eternal life? Simply put: It is the life that lasts for eternity.

The Bible expresses and explains eternal life in different ways, but they all come down to four aspects: A) Eternal life is the life that is lived in the presence of God. Without God, there's no eternal life. B) Eternal life is only available in Christ. It is God's gift freely available to those who believe in Jesus. C) Anyone who knows God and Jesus the Messiah has eternal life here and now. You don't have to die to have eternal life. D) Eternal life culminates in Heaven after physical death.

A. Eternal life is the life that is lived in the presence of God. Without God, there's no eternal life.

Now, do you remember the question: Does everyone have eternal life? I mean, every human being who was ever born and died, do they all have eternal life? Well, it all depends on how you define and understand what eternal life is. If you mean that even though the body decays, every human soul never perishes and, therefore, goes on beyond physical death, and that's what you call eternal life, then, the answer is yes. However, in the biblical sense, the answer is no, because God's Word plainly says that not everyone will have eternal life.

Here's what I mean. Eternal life in the Bible is far different from the one some people may think what it is. As a matter of fact, eternal life in the Bible is more than the life that goes on forever and ever. It means the life everlasting *in the presence of God*. Therefore, the life that goes on forever and ever without God is not eternal life at all. By this definition atheists cannot and will not have eternal life, because they deny the existence of God.

God's Word uses 'eternal life' interchangeably with 'the Kingdom of God' and 'Heaven' which is God's abode. Let me reiterate. Apart from God, there is no eternal life. No God, no eternal life. In other words, even though everyone's soul goes on and on for eternity beyond physical death, if their life is not lived in the presence of the holy God, the Bible never calls such a life eternal life. Instead, it is called 'eternal punishment' (Matthew 25:46) or 'eternal fire' (commonly known as Hell) (Matthew 18:8, 25:41, Jude 1:7). By the way, both last forever and ever as eternal life does just in a different place.

Next question. Do I have eternal life? If not, how do I have it? You can have it through Christ, the Bible declares, because Christ Himself alone is eternal life. Apart from Him, no eternal life. That leads us to the next aspect of eternal life.

B. Eternal life is obtained in Christ alone because Christ Himself is eternal life (1 John 1:2).

This eternal life is hidden in Christ and reserved for those who believe in the name of Jesus, God's Son. We all know that a person consists of three parts: body, soul, and spirit. The Bible says that our spirit was dead until we meet Christ and accept Him as Savior and Lord. When we invite Him into our hearts, He comes in and abides in us through His Spirit (Ephesians 3:17, Revelation 3:20). The indwelling Christ, the life-giving Spirit (1 Corinthians 15:45), quickens our dead spirit and makes it alive again. Christ gives eternal life in us from then on.

Remember: this eternal life is a gracious gift of God to us (Romans 6:23). It is also an unmerited gift—no one can or has to earn it through their own goodness or good deeds. Only through faith in Jesus Christ we receive eternal life. Only those who accept this gift will have eternal life. That means, those who reject Christ won't have eternal life.

C. The third aspect of eternal life is: to know God and to know Jesus the Messiah.

In His prayer to His Father, Jesus explains what eternal life is: to **know** the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom God has sent (John 17:3). The key phrase here is to know God and Jesus. To **know** means more than intellectual understanding or knowledge. It is, rather, a personal, experiential, and real knowledge of God and of Jesus that we can gain through obedience to God and His Son Jesus. Ask yourself: Do I know the only true God and Jesus Christ personally and experientially? E.g., 1. Some of us may know a lot about Christ. You read about Him in the Bible. You heard a sermon about Him. Almost weekly. But the real question is: do you know of Him, not about Him? Do you know Him personally? E.g., 2. When Mary, the mother of Jesus, was told by an angel of the Lord that she would be pregnant with a child, she said to the angel "How will this be? *Since I am a virgin*" (Luke 1:34). The literal translation of the same sentence is: since I don't know (γινωσκω—pronounced 'gi (hard 'g' sound like 'get')-no-s-ko') a man. The same verb 'to know' is used in John 17:3 where Jesus says: those who know God the Father and Jesus Christ have eternal life. It is an intimate knowledge of God and Jesus through experience.

By the way, you don't have to die to have eternal life. For those who have accepted Jesus as Savior and Lord, eternal life begins right there and then. That's why the Bible says, you already have it. It is in your possession during your life on earth if you personally know the only true God and His Son Jesus Christ.

Let me say it again: those who intimately **know** the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom God has sent have eternal life *here and now*. That's why Jesus says that anyone who believes in Him **already** has eternal life --the tense of the verb 'to have' 'present'--(ἔχει ζωὴν αἰώνιον), not 'future' (John 5:24). E.g., Once I had an interview with a candidate for pastoral ministry. My question for her was: Do you have eternal life? For the next few minutes, she only elaborated on eternal life when

we die. When I said that we already have eternal life since we know Christ as Lord and Savior, she was quite puzzled with my answer.

D. The last aspect of eternal life is this: its highest form is yet to come. It culminates in Heaven after physical death.

E.g., A pastor was preaching on going to heaven. He said, "How many of you would like to go to heaven tonight?" And everybody raised their hands but a little boy in the balcony. He tried again, "How many of you would like to go to heaven?" Everybody but that one little fellow in the balcony. So he said to him, "Son, don't you want to go to heaven?" The little boy said, "Yeah, someday, but I thought you were getting' up a load right now (James Hewett, Illustrations Unlimited).

Like this boy, most people, Christians and non-Christians alike, associate the life eternal with Heaven, and believe that their eternal life will begin 5 minutes after death. There is a legitimate reason why people think that way. For instance, the Scripture talks about *inheriting* eternal life after we die. We all are appointed to die once, and after that everyone will stand before God and be judged according to what s/he has done (Hebrews 9:27, Romans 2:6). At that time, those who have obeyed the Lord with all their hearts and minds (including those who have made sacrifices for the sake of Jesus in their lives and possessions) will be rewarded and inherit eternal life (Matthew 19:29, John 12:25).

Conclusion

I hope, by now, you realized that Jesus has everything to do with eternal life. If you want eternal life, accept Him as your Savior and Lord. Know Him. Love Him. Obey Him. He is your eternal life. He is the giver of eternal life. God's Word also testifies to Him who Himself is eternal life. In Him there's eternal life. Those who accept Jesus Christ have eternal life. Those who reject Jesus Christ and those who don't know Jesus don't have eternal life. Let me recap four aspects of eternal life: it is the life that is lived in the presence of God. It is God's free gift through Christ. Those who personally know God and Jesus Christ the Messiah have eternal life here and now. It is our inheritance in Heaven after our physical death.

Let us pray.