

The Wednesday Word, March 13, 2013: Eternal Life

Because of the gospel, we are given life, not for a day or a month or even a year, but given eternal life! That's the way Jesus tells it. He said, "My sheep hear my voice -----and I give unto them eternal life" (John 10:27-28).

What a stunning promise! What a splendid gift! Notice how He says "I give." Obviously, if He gives eternal life, then we didn't have it in the first place. Furthermore, since it's a gift, that means we have neither earned nor deserved it.

It has been argued that the term eternal life also includes an idea of a certain quality of life. Indeed, Jesus didn't merely promise us eternal existence, He promised something far better, ... eternal life. And it begins right here at the New Birth as He imparts to us a measure of the life of the age to come.

Part of this life is the absence of condemnation. If you are in Christ, there is now therefore no condemnation (Romans 8:1). That's part of having eternal life. Christ Jesus came into the world on purpose, He came to be condemned in our place. He came so that we would be acquitted, declared righteous and adopted. He came to give us the gift of Himself ... eternal life (1 John 5:11).

As Christians, living under the gospel transforms and helps us to enjoy the purchase made, by Christ, on our behalf. However, if we live under a religious system devoid of the gospel, a system that urges us to try harder and harder, it only serves to manufacture guilt and death. The truth is, right standing with God, and His gift of eternal life, have nothing whatsoever to do with how we behave.

Someone says, "That's dangerous doctrine brother! People will abuse those things if you preach them." True, some people probably will. But are you saying that because people might misuse these glorious truths that we should not preach them? Listen to me, some years ago my cousin, in Canada, was killed when a snow-laden branch of a tree fell on her, does this mean that, because they can be dangerous, all trees and forests should be cut down ? Also, when I was a child, a young boy from our village, in Ireland, drowned while swimming in the sea! Does that mean we should drain the ocean? Sometimes trees and oceans do terrible things. So it is with people! I'm advocating, however, that in spite of the dangers of potential abuse, that we believers live in and proclaim the gospel and enjoy the wonderful freedom afforded to us by its gospel mercies.

It is only through the gospel that we can enjoy eternal life here and now and out into eternity. Christ Jesus, our gospel, is the giver of eternal life (John 17:2) and we have the privilege of enjoying both Him and His free gift.

There was an old black preacher in Richmond, Virginia, John Jasper, during the American Civil War who preached to very large audiences. People came from everywhere to hear him.

Someone asked him one day; "When, you get to heaven and they stop you at the door, and ask, what right have you got to be here in this celestial city, in the abode of God, in the majestic heavens, what are you going to say?"

John Jasper said, "I am going to say; "I ain't got no right to be here at all. I am not here on my rights; I am here on the righteousness of Jesus Christ my Lord and Saviour. I am here on the mercy of another who gave me eternal life."

What a wonderful answer. Our hope of Heaven is in the Lord's doing, dying and rising again on our behalf. We live, not because of our merit but because of His mercy. He's the one who has given us the gift of eternal life, and we are the ones who say, in return, "thank you!"

And that's the Gospel Truth!