

“IF A MAN DIES WILL HE LIVE AGAIN?”



A STUDY OF ETERNAL LIFE

BOBBY DEASON

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AGAIN?”**

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Life Communications
Lady Lake, FL

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PREFACE

In a Peanuts comic strip, there was a conversation between Lucy and Charlie Brown. Lucy said that life is like a deck chair: Some place it so they can see where they are going; some place it so they can see where they have been; and some place it so they can see where they are at present. Charlie Brown's reply: "I can't even get mine unfolded."

If you are having a difficult time unfolding your life's chair, this booklet will help you. What is life? Unanswered questions touching life's mysteries and purposes are many. This should not cause us to despair, however. If we can find a satisfactory answer to the "big question," then the smaller ones won't seem so large. What is the "big question"? Please read on.

The Indians have a wonderful saying:

“When you were born, you cried,
and the world rejoiced.

Live your life in such a manner
that when you die,
the world cries, and you rejoice.”¹

*“Man born of woman is of few days and
full of trouble. He springs up like a
flower and withers away; like a fleeting
shadow, he does not endure.”²*

¹Old Indian Proverb.

²Job 14:1.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This booklet is dedicated to the memory of my mother, Mary Ebbie Deason, who died in Jesus, September 13, 1990. She gave me life from her womb, but more importantly, through teaching and a godly example, she brought me to eternal life in my Lord Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory and honor for all that we are and all that we do.

INTRODUCTION

As a local church preacher, I've been called at all hours of the day and night by weeping, brokenhearted people with a message that a family member just died. "Will you conduct the funeral service?" I'm asked.

What do you say as you sit with a sobbing wife whose husband died in an accident just minutes before? She has four small children. How do you tell them that daddy is dead? What do you say? As you stand beside a hole in the ground watching the coffin being lowered into it, what do you say to the grieving family? What? "Don't cry"? "Be strong"? "It will get better with time"? "I'm sorry"?

Job, a person written about in the Bible, asked this very important question: "If a man dies, will he live again?"³ The Bible says, *yes!* I'm writing this booklet to document

that answer. We know that if a man lives, he will die; cemeteries, like silent sentinels, remind us of this truth.

But this book is not about death. It's about life: real living.

[As I was sitting at the computer, proofreading the sentence above, my daughter, Starla, brought her daughter, Telah, into my office and asked me to burp her. Telah is my four-day old, first grandchild. As I look into her perfectly formed, beautiful little face, life seems so very special.]

2

We Didn't Choose To Be Born, But We Do Choose How We Shall Live

Robert Alton Harris died in California's San Quentin prison gas chamber, April 22, 1992, for killing two people. Clemency was denied by Pete Wilson, Governor of Califor-

nia. The reasons given for this denial are as follows:

“The record now before me in the application for clemency adequately demonstrates that Mr. Harris’ childhood was a living nightmare....But victimized though he may have been, Harris was not deprived of the capacity to premeditate, to plan or to understand the consequences of his actions.

3

Robert Harris, the child, had no choice. He was a victim of serious and inexcusable abuse. Robert Harris, the man, did have a choice. He chose to take a life, two lives....As great as is my compassion for Robert Harris the child, I cannot excuse or forgive the choice made by Robert Harris the man.”

As Robert Harris had a choice concerning how he would live, we have a choice

how we shall live. We also have a choice whether we shall live or die. No, we cannot control physical life and death completely.⁴ We may (through diet, exercise, caution, and healthy genes) prolong our lives, but we cannot say with any assurance, "I will not die," or "I will live for as long I choose." God, through time, circumstances, and reasons known only to Him, controls the years of our lives. However, each of us is given a choice to live or die **spiritually**.

4 Stanley Shipp, a preacher friend of mine, was sitting beside an angry and frustrated man on an airplane. Before sitting down, the man wadded up his suit coat and threw it in the overhead luggage compartment. After a short time, Stanley got up and opened the storage compartment, took out the man's coat, shook out the wrinkles, folded it neatly and laid it back in the compartment. As Stanley took his seat, the man looked at him

⁴See James 4:13-15: ...“If it is the Lord’s will, we will live and do this or that.”

and asked, "What do you do for a living?" Stanley responded, "I teach people how to live." "Start teaching," the man said.

A few years ago, a friend of ours visited with hotel entrepreneur Conrad Hilton. As they separated, an exchange of calling cards took place. Our friend shares Mr. Hilton's quote, *Food for Thought*, which appears on the card: "In 1923, a very important meeting was held at the Edgewater Beach Hotel in Chicago. Attending this meeting were nine of the world's most successful financiers. Those present were: The president of the largest independent steel company; the president of the largest utility company; the president of the largest gas company; the greatest wheat speculator; the president of the New York Stock Exchange; a member of the president's cabinet; the greatest 'bear' in Wall Street; head of the world's greatest monopoly; president of the Bank of International Settlements.

Certainly we must admit that here were gathered a group of the world's most successful men. At least, men who had found the secret of 'making money.' Twenty-five years later let's see where [seven of] these men are: The president of the largest independent steel company—Charles Schwab—died bankrupt and lived on borrowed money for five years before his death; the president of the largest utility company—Samuel Insull—died a fugitive from justice and penniless in a foreign land; the president of the largest gas company—Howard Hospson—is now insane; the greatest wheat speculator—Arthur Cutten—died abroad, insolvent; the president of the New York Stock Exchange —Richard Whitney—was recently released from Sing Sing Penitentiary; the member of the President's cabinet—Albert Fall—suicide; the president of the Bank of International Settlements—Leon Fraser—died a suicide" (Shirl K. Evans, Jr., 1987). All of these men learned well the art of making a lot of money but not one of them learned **how to live.**

This book is about living. Living day to day is hard. Stop reading and think about yesterday and perhaps the day before. I'd guess that in each of those days there were some difficult moments? Stack the difficulties of the past thirty days on top of those and you have a heavy weight to carry. Am I wrong? Life can become brutally hard, can't it? Yes, but the way we think about life determines how it affects us. The load of life can be lightened by thinking like God thinks, as the following Scriptures teach.

7

Your attitude [“have this mind in you” in some translations] should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest

place and gave him the name that is above every name....⁵

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—which is your spiritual worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.⁶

8

The Bible is the best resource book for living. The Bible claims its teachings can lead us to the **one** who will give us eternal life. He will help us to live with joy and peace even when our world is full of war, crime, and social injustices. He will be with us in all of our pain and suffering. He will help lift the overloads of this life's burdens.

⁵Phil. 2:5-9.

⁶Rom. 12:1-2.

He has in my life, again and again. His name is Jesus, the Son of God. Listen to Him:

*"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."*⁷

Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?"⁸

9

Jesus gave Martha the opportunity to express her faith in **Him**, believing that **He** could raise the dead. The question for you and me is, "Do we—you and I—believe it?"

⁷Matt. 11:28-30.

⁸John 11:25-26.

Jesus Promises Eternal Life, But How Do We Receive It?

He was young, rich, and good. He ran after what he wanted. Yet, there was something very important missing in his life. He was spiritually dead and in desperate need of **eternal life**. Eternal simply means never ending. For a young child, a short trip may seem like an eternity. That is the way it seemed to me, back in the 'forties, making the 165 mile trip from Houston to Palestine, Texas, to see my grandparents.

10

Even now, at the age of fifty-four, eternal life is mind-boggling to me. It seems like it couldn't be true. Life without end? My experience tells me life dies. The cemetery cries out, "Death is the end to life!" My spirit shouts back at the grave, "No! You are lying." Do I shout in desperation or from confidence? Is the worth of life an end in itself? Henry David Thoreau suggested, "The mass of men live lives of quiet desper-

ation." Henry W. Longfellow wrote, "Life is real! Life is earnest! And the grave is not its goal."

Is it possible for us to know the truth about eternal life? We have never seen the dead come to life. Could it be possible? Who has the wisdom to tell us the secrets about life and death?

I've read statements by individuals claiming out of the body experiences. They say that they died and saw relatives and friends mourning over them. Medics or doctors were trying to revive them. Some of these people said that after death there is no heaven or hell. Others said they entered a peaceful and calm place like they expected heaven to be. A few said they saw Jesus. Their testimonies are contradictory and far from convincing.

The Big Question

Ponder again the question asked by the ancient wise man, Job: "If a man dies, will he live again?" What do you think? Have you thought about this recently? Do you think the question is valid?

12

*He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end.*⁹

I don't know about you, but I have a hard time believing that the grave is the end of it all. I don't believe in reincarnation, but there is in my heart a passion to keep on living after I die.

The Bible is our only source of information about eternal life. It is alive with state-

⁹Eccl. 3:11.

ments and examples about life after death. The classic statement comes from the mouth of Jesus Christ, whom I believe was God in the flesh. In the presence of death, when the tears were flowing down the cheeks of his relatives and friends, He said:

... “Your brother will rise again.” Martha answered, “I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.” Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?”¹⁰

The question that Jesus asked was, “Do you believe this?” In other words, “Do you believe that in me you will never die spiritually?” **That is the big question.** Do you believe Jesus can give you eternal life now, even though you will die physically? Please, ask yourself that question. You may answer,

¹⁰John 11:23-26.

“Yes!” or “I don’t know” or “I’m not sure, but I’d like to know” or perhaps “I must have believable evidence before I’ll accept the idea.” That is good; read on.

The Reality of Death

14 Does that inner voice track you like a bloodhound? Does it speak to you as you lie awake in bed at night? Do you think about life and death? Reality comes when we remember recently walking away from the graveside of a friend. She collapsed and died at the company picnic. All the heroic life support efforts failed. If anyone was a picture of health and beauty, she was. Now she is dead. Most of us have these kinds of memories, don’t we? Someone close to us has died. Grandparent. Dad. Mom. Brother. Sister. Husband. Wife. Daughter. Son. Friend. The pain and loss are real. It hurts. My mother died a year and a half ago; I

miss her very much. In a sense, she died mentally with the dreaded Alzheimer's disease many years before.

We remember for a few days, a week or so, then its back to the everyday grind of a busy work schedule, longing for some rest and relaxation. The demanding thoughts of the day—the children, school, meals, work, the broken appliance that must be repaired and the fence that needs mending—all distract us momentarily from thinking about the inevitable fact of death.

15

What Is the Meaning of My Life?

Some folks say, "Life for me is the mountains, the seaside, camping out with family or working in my garden." Others say, "Life is making money and enjoying all that money will buy." I stop and think: "But death is coming. I will die. My children will die. So will all my friends." The silence of

the cemetery screams this truth. What then is the meaning of my life? ¹¹ Is it only to end in death? Jesus Christ came to earth with a great alternative to death: the gift of eternal life. Eternal life is the goal of our physical life!

Seeing Eternal Life Through the Eyes of Jesus

16 Read what the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, said about eternal life in the following verses. Open your Bible, your mind and your heart as you read the contexts of these verses for further study; the words of the Master will be like a breath of fresh air to your spirit.

As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before

¹¹See James 4:13-17.

*him. “Good teacher,” he asked, “What must I do to inherit eternal life?”*¹²

*“...that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.”*¹³

*“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”*¹⁴

*“Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on him.”*¹⁵

“...but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water

¹²Mark 10:17.

¹³John 3:15.

¹⁴John 3:16.

¹⁵John 3:36.

*I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”*¹⁶

*“Even now the reaper draws his wages, even now he harvests the crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together.”*¹⁷

*“I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.”*¹⁸

18

*“You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me....”*¹⁹

¹⁶John 4:14.

¹⁷John 4:36.

¹⁸John 5:24.

¹⁹John 5:39.

“Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. On him God the Father has placed his seal of approval.”²⁰

“For my Father’s will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.”²¹

“Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.”²²

Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.”²³

²⁰John 6:27.

²¹John 6:40.

²²John 6:54.

²³John 6:68.

*“I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand.”*²⁴

*“The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.”*²⁵

*“I know that his command leads to eternal life. So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say.”*²⁶

20

*“For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him.”*²⁷

²⁴John 10:28.

²⁵John 12:25.

²⁶John 12:50.

²⁷John 17:2.

*“Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.”*²⁸

These Scriptures should have painted a clear picture in our mind. God wants to give the gift of eternal life to all people. The gift of eternal life is in Jesus. It is a gift of love from God. Jesus is the only one who can give this gift (John 17:2). We can't go to any other source for it (John 6:68). Eternal life comes from knowing God and His son, Jesus Christ. Knowing suggests intimacy.

21

Viewing Eternal Life Through the Pen of the Apostle Peter

Like an artist looking at his subject from many different angles, we need to see eternal life from different vantage points. Look at

²⁸John 17:3.

eternal life with me through the eyes of the apostle Peter.

“‘You have made known to me the paths of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence.’” ²⁹

“God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact.” ³⁰

“You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this.” ³¹

22

“Go, stand in the temple courts,” he said, “and tell the people the full message of this new life.” ³²

²⁹Acts 2:28.

³⁰Acts 2:32.

³¹Acts 3:15.

³²Acts 5:20.

*When they heard this, they had no further objections and praised God, saying, "So then, God has even granted the Gentiles repentance unto life."*³³

*For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers....*³⁴

*Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.*³⁵

His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness

³³Acts 11:18.

³⁴1 Peter 1:18.

³⁵1 Peter 3:7.

*through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.*³⁶

The Apostle Paul and Eternal Life

The Holy Spirit gave the apostle Paul additional insight about eternal life. This will help us to see even more clearly the idea of life without end.

24

*Then Paul and Barnabas answered them boldly: "We had to speak the word of God to you first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles."*³⁷

When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord;

³⁶2 Peter 1:3.

³⁷Acts 13:46.

*and all who were appointed for eternal life believed.*³⁸

*To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life.*³⁹

*...so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*⁴⁰

*But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life.*⁴¹

25

³⁸Acts 13:48.

³⁹Rom. 2:7.

⁴⁰Rom. 5:21.

⁴¹Rom. 6:22.

*For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*⁴²

*The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.*⁴³

*But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life.*⁴⁴

Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good

⁴²Rom. 6:23.

⁴³Gal. 6:8.

⁴⁴1 Tim. 1:16.

*confession in the presence of many witnesses.*⁴⁵

*...a faith and knowledge resting on the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time.*⁴⁶

*...so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.*⁴⁷

*As it is written: "I have made you a father of many nations." He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed—the God who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were.*⁴⁸

⁴⁵ 1 Tim. 6:12.

⁴⁶ Titus 1:2.

⁴⁷ Titus 3:7.

⁴⁸ Rom. 4:17.

*He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.*⁴⁹

*For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!*⁵⁰

*For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.*⁵¹

28

Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men,

⁴⁹Rom. 4:25.

⁵⁰Rom. 5:10.

⁵¹Rom. 5:17.

*so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men.*⁵²

*We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.*⁵³

*Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness.*⁵⁴

29

In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the

⁵²Rom. 5:18.

⁵³Rom. 6:4.

⁵⁴Rom. 6:13.

*coming age, so that they may take hold
of the life that is truly life.*⁵⁵

The Apostle John Finishes Our Portrait of Eternal Life

*But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*⁵⁶

30

*That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life.*⁵⁷

⁵⁵1 Tim. 6:19.

⁵⁶John 20:31.

⁵⁷1 John 1:1.

*The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us.*⁵⁸

*And this is what he promised us—even eternal life.*⁵⁹

*We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death.*⁶⁰

*Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him.*⁶¹

This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we

31

⁵⁸ 1 John 1:2.

⁵⁹ 1 John 2:25.

⁶⁰ 1 John 3:14.

⁶¹ 1 John 3:15.

32

*ought to lay down our lives for our brothers.*⁶²

*And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.*⁶³

*He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.*⁶⁴

*I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.*⁶⁵

If anyone sees his brother commit a sin that does not lead to death, he should pray and God will give him life. I refer to those whose sin does not lead to

⁶²1 John 3:16.

⁶³1 John 5:11.

⁶⁴1 John 5:12.

⁶⁵1 John 5:13.

*death. There is a sin that leads to death. I am not saying that he should pray about that.*⁶⁶

*We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true. And we are in him who is true—even in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.*⁶⁷

*“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.”*⁶⁸

“To the angel of the church in Smyrna write: These are the words of him who

⁶⁶1 John 5:16.

⁶⁷1 John 5:20.

⁶⁸Rev. 2:7.

*is the First and the Last, who died and came to life again.”*⁶⁹

*“Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life.”*⁷⁰

*“He who overcomes will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out his name from the book of life, but will acknowledge his name before my Father and his angels.”*⁷¹

And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were

⁶⁹Rev. 2:8.

⁷⁰Rev. 2:10.

⁷¹Rev. 3:5.

*judged according to what they had done
as recorded in the books.*⁷²

*If anyone's name was not found written
in the book of life, he was thrown into
the lake of fire.*⁷³

*Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor
will anyone who does what is shameful
or deceitful, but only those whose names
are written in the Lamb's book of life.*⁷⁴

Please, don't skip over the above Scripture quotations. Read them carefully. They will lead you to Jesus, who will give you eternal life. If? "If" is a conditional word. The gift of eternal life is conditional. Jesus offers it as a gift, but there are conditions that must be met to receive it. As I try to guide you through a clear study of receiving

35

⁷²Rev. 20:12.

⁷³Rev. 20:15.

⁷⁴Rev. 21:27.

and keeping the gift of eternal life, come along with me. I'll be learning with you. The word of God is always fresh and inspiring.

Receiving Eternal Life: A Gift of God's Grace

Grace means favor. It cannot be earned or deserved. A man approached me as I stood in my front yard. "Sir," he said, "I have a free gift for you." In his hand was a red lantern lamp. I grabbed it from his hand and said, "Thank you, I appreciate it." Then I turned and walked away pretending to go into my house. He said, "Wait a minute!" Before he could speak, I asked him, "What do you want to sell me?" He replied, "Nothing." I knew there was a catch or a condition to this so-called **free gift**. It is very seldom that you get something for nothing. He was a vacuum cleaner salesman.

When Jesus offers us the gift of eternal life, we can be sure that there are no gimmicks or baited hooks, but there are some conditions. We do not earn the gift by meeting the conditions. Faith is a condition, but grace is the means.⁷⁵ Someone suggested that grace, acrostically viewed, is “God’s Riches At Christ’s Expense.” I like that. Peter wrote that we are redeemed with “the precious blood of Christ,” not with our purchasing power and not because we are among the “who’s who” of society.⁷⁶ Eternal life is a gift from God.⁷⁷

37

Don’t miss this vital point. Please, do not destroy the grace of God by presuming eternal life is somehow earned by our goodness or by our reception of it. It is a gift of

⁷⁵Read carefully Eph. 2:8.

⁷⁶See I Peter 1:17-19.

⁷⁷See Rom. 6:23.

God's grace, unearned and undeserved, period. Don't think that you can grab the gift from the hands of Jesus and go on with life as usual, enjoying the gift without meeting His terms. The life-style of many professing Christians denies that they are who they claim to be. They simply do not "seek first the kingdom of God," ⁷⁸ which is a requirement of living in the state of eternal life.

38 The gift is from Jesus. It is the gift of Himself. "The grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men"; that grace is Jesus Himself. ⁷⁹ We have a choice. God is not going to force His grace upon us. The choice to live or die eternally is ours. I hope you will make the choice to live and not die.

⁷⁸ See Matt. 6:25-34.

⁷⁹ See Titus 2:11; compare John 1:14.

The Conditions That Must Be Met to Receive the Gift

When I was in the U.S. Army, much of our training was by the numbers. That means step by step. The step by step method helped me to learn then; I hope it helps you now to understand clearly the conditions for receiving *the gift of eternal life*.

Remember the rich young man who came running to Jesus asking the question, “What must I do to inherit eternal life”? ⁸⁰ Jesus told him clearly and he understood very well, but he was unwilling to meet the condition. He walked away sorrowful, without the gift, because his possessions were more important to him.

39

My prayer is that you will understand the message of eternal life as taught in Scripture,

⁸⁰Mark 10:17.

and that you will be more interested in it than in just living for the moment: the “eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we die”⁸¹ mentality. Or as Jawaharlal Nehru wrote, “I am interested in this world, in this life, not some other world or future life.”

40

An honest evaluation of the evidence and a sincere desire to know the truth will help you make the proper response of faith to the message of eternal life. If you do, then you can live confidently and joyfully now by faith⁸² as you wait for the coming of your Lord Jesus from heaven. Then, all who have lived by faith in Him will be received into heaven forever. That is when eternal life with all its rewarding wonders will be real-

⁸¹See 1 Cor. 15:32.

⁸²See 2 Cor. 4:16-5:10; “We walk by faith, not by sight” (v.7). See also Larry Deason, *Not By Sight* (Clifton Park, NY: Life Communications, 1987).

ized and hope will turn into sight.⁸³ I can hardly wait!

Responding To God's Gift: *Believing*

You must believe that Jesus is the Son of God and that He is the one who can and will give you eternal life.⁸⁴ If you don't believe this, you will die in your sins. Then God will have no choice but to separate you from Himself eternally.⁸⁵

41

You may ask, "How do I believe in Jesus?" That's a good question. Belief comes

⁸³Carefully study 1 Thess. 4:13-18; 2 Thess. 1:7-10; Rom. 8:22-25.

⁸⁴See John 3:16; 8:24.

⁸⁵Carefully consider 2 Thess. 1:7-10.

from credible evidence. Faith is another word for belief.

*Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.*⁸⁶

Faith comes from studying the Word of God.⁸⁷ This point is well illustrated by the following words written by the apostle Paul to the evangelist Timothy.

*I have been reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also.*⁸⁸

⁸⁶Heb. 11:1; see also Rom. 1:16-17; 10:17; Eph. 1:8;
1 John 5:4-5.

⁸⁷See Rom. 10:17.

⁸⁸2 Tim. 1:5.

*...and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*⁸⁹

My mother's teaching and godly example produced faith in me. Let's call this inherited faith. Her mother taught her about Jesus, instilling faith in her as a young girl. My mom's daddy, who was a Christian, died before she was born. The faith in Jesus that belonged to them has now become mine through personal study of the Scripture. In order for "inherited faith" to be valuable, it must become "personal biblical faith." Timothy's father was an unbeliever. But that didn't stop his mother from being a believer, nor did it prevent her from living a Christian

43

⁸⁹ 2 Tim. 3:15-17.

life and teaching her young son the truth about God.⁹⁰

Read the Gospels So That Faith in Jesus Can Be Personally Yours

The best way to believe is to read the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. These authors introduce us to Jesus Christ. Listen to the apostle John:

44

*Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*⁹¹

⁹⁰See Acts 16:1.

⁹¹John 20:30-31.

Notice the highlighted text teaches us that we can learn to believe by reading what John wrote.

Read the Gospel of John. If, when you finish the reading, you believe in Jesus, then the purpose of God in the death of Jesus and the writing of John is fulfilled in your life, and my prayer for you is answered.

The Meaning of Faith

45

To believe means to know and accept certain facts, such as Jesus' miraculous conception and virgin birth; the true humanity and deity of Jesus; His miracles (the greatest being his own resurrection from the dead); His death for the atonement of your sins and mine; His coming again as He claims. If you do not believe these teachings, then you cannot have a saving faith. For without faith

it is impossible to please God.⁹² That means we must understand His teachings and follow in His way. By studying His life in the Gospels and by reading the letters written in the New Testament to various churches and individuals, teaching them how to live the Christian life, we also learn. We do not have to know everything about Jesus before we can begin a life of trust in Him. Start by accepting Jesus to be your Lord and Savior; then *follow where his teachings lead you.*⁹³

46

Faith is joyful trust or obedient belief in Jesus, as taught in Scripture. It is not a mindless leap into the dark. Faith is the channel through which the saving grace of God flows.

⁹²See Heb. 11:6.

⁹³See Luke 9:23; 14:25-33.

*For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God....*⁹⁴

Responding To God's Gift: *Repenting*

Webster's dictionary says that 'repent' means "to be sorry 1: to turn from sin and dedicate oneself to the amendment of one's life 2: a: to feel regret or contrition b: to change one's mind." Seventy-four times the word means, in the *New International Version* Bible,⁹⁵ to have a change of heart/mind made possible by understanding (belief or faith).

47

During the Inquisitions, beginning in the thirteenth century, deadly force was used by the Catholic Church against those who

⁹⁴Eph. 2:8.

⁹⁵See under Scripture index (Repentance).

opposed their belief system. The authorization for this action was given by the Latern council of 1215 AD. Heretics, many falsely branded as such, were killed in the name of Jesus Christ by the church. The church **believed** that killing these rebels was God's will. "The inquisitors...were members of the Franciscan and the Dominican orders...who killed religious heretics."⁹⁶ This sounds much like Saul of Tarsus, later to become the apostle Paul, who killed Christians with a good conscience.⁹⁷

48

The Aztec Indians of Mexico sacrificed their children to the god of the sun. They **believed** that they would all be put to death by this god if he were not appeased by human blood sacrifices. They killed thousands and thousands of their own children. When they did not have enough of their own

⁹⁶F.W. Mattox, *The Eternal Kingdom* (Delight, AR: Gospel Light Publishing, 1961), p. 215.

⁹⁷Read carefully Acts 8:1-4; 23:1.

children, they warred against their neighbors to capture more children to offer as sacrifices. The consequences of our beliefs can be very severe. Therefore, we must be careful what we believe.

Belief definitely has consequences. We act upon what we believe is true. Like an arrow piercing our heart, initiated by the truth about Jesus, godly sorrow causes repentance.

"Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.... Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom

you crucified, both Lord and Christ.” When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?” Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.” With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.” Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.⁹⁸

A genuine faith, based upon truth, precedes a change of heart. A real heart-change will result in a change of life. The conviction of one's belief leads to repentance.

⁹⁸Acts 2:22-24, 36-41.

Repentance Comes As a Result of Conviction

In the above illustration, the people who were cut to the heart were commanded to repent. Often, because of new understanding, hard hearts will be softened as in this instance. The gospel is God's surgical scalpel, effective in opening up our hearts. According to our definition of repentance (change of mind and turning), you can see that these people changed their lives by repentance and baptism. Later in this study we will see how baptism relates to receiving eternal life. Recognize also the fruit of their repentance:

51

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every

day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. ⁹⁹

A Call to Repentance

52 If you have not accepted Jesus as your Savior, if you have rejected Him as the Lord of your life by neglect, indifference, or stubborn defiance, now is the time to make that correction. Repent, be sorry for your sin of unbelief, keeping in mind that sin is a violation of God's law. It took only a single sin of yours or mine to crucify Jesus. Don't forget that it was your sin and mine that caused Jesus to die. We are as guilty of His death as the Jews and the Roman soldiers

⁹⁹Acts 2:42-47.

who crucified Him.¹⁰⁰ Repent and turn to God so that He might forgive you. Read the Scriptures listed under ‘Repentance’ in the back of this booklet. Read them now, please.

Sin Makes Repentance Necessary

What is sin? Who is a sinner? What is the result of sin? These questions must be answered so that we will know what to repent of, and when. Also, we must face the consequences of unrepented sin. 53

Sin is translated in the New Testament from the Greek noun *hamartia* and the verb *hamartano*. These words literally mean “to miss the mark.” God’s will is the missed target. For example, honesty is God’s will; a lie misses the mark. In the Epistle to the Romans, the apostle Paul writes:

¹⁰⁰See Acts 2:23.

...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.... ¹⁰¹

Some specific sins named in the Bible are in the Scripture quotations that follow:

Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God. ¹⁰²

The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and

¹⁰¹Rom. 3:23; compare Rom. 6:23.

¹⁰²1 Cor. 6:9-11.

*debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.*¹⁰³

This is not a complete list of all the sins named in the Bible. Sin(s) is mentioned about 765 times. Synonyms of sin such as evil, wickedness, worldliness, and other such words often come from the pens of the Bible writers.

55

Who is a sinner? We don't like to think of ourselves as sinners. We are good citizens. We try to honor the law. We treat others with respect and fairness. We live according to our own designed moral code. We say: "I'm no thief; I don't hurt people; I'm fairly honest; I'm a good person." Maybe those things are true, but the real question

¹⁰³Gal. 5:19-21.

is, “Have you sinned against God’s laws?” If you have, you are dead in sin and need a savior. As we look at ourselves in the mirror of God’s word, honesty demands that we say, “We have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” All of us, arriving at a stage of life knowing the difference between right and wrong and choosing the wrong, **actually sin**. You must face this truth with humility and fierce honesty: you are a sinner. So am I. All have sinned.¹⁰⁴

56 The result of sin is spiritual death:

For the wages of sin is death....¹⁰⁵

“...if you do not believe that I am [the one I claim to be], you will indeed die in your sins.”¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴Read carefully Rom. 3:23.

¹⁰⁵Rom. 6:23; see also 1 Cor. 15:56, “The sting of death is sin....”

¹⁰⁶John 8:24.

Adam and Eve illustrate this point (Genesis 2:17-3:24). You will notice that God commanded Adam not to eat of one particular tree in the garden (that was a law), under the penalty of death if he did so. Sin is a transgression or a violation of God's law.¹⁰⁷ Adam and Eve ate; they sinned and died a spiritual death. Spiritual death is the just punishment for violating God's law. Sin separates us from God.¹⁰⁸

Let me be personal. Unless you first accept and acknowledge that you are a sinner who needs salvation, you will not have godly sorrow that causes repentance. You may be like others I've known, or like myself, who used to (and sometimes still do) make excuses for sins, blaming others, or even denying the act was sinful. Don't do that! Forgiveness can only come when we say, "I have sinned." Read the touching story

57

¹⁰⁷ See 1 John 3:4.

¹⁰⁸ See Isa. 59:1-2.

of King David's sinful action and forgiveness.¹⁰⁹

If you now believe that Jesus Christ is the Savior, if you have confessed that you are a sinner, if you are determined to change your life and conform it to that of the Lord Jesus, then you are ready for the next step of faith that brings you to the **gift of eternal life**. Jesus said, "Come to me... and I will give...."¹¹⁰ We must walk to Jesus and He will graciously give the gift that the Lord has promised. The Father has purposed the gift and the Son has provided the means to receive it. Appreciation of God's marvelous gift will motivate one to turn to Jesus and the great salvation that he freely offers to all. Are **you** now ready to take this next step of faith?

58

¹⁰⁹Read carefully 2 Sam. 11-12; note 12:13, "I have sinned against the LORD."

¹¹⁰Matt. 11:28.

Responding To God's Gift: *Being Born Again*

I hope that you are as interested and excited as I am about this study. Step three of faith takes you into a relationship with Jesus where the promised gift of eternal life is given.

*We live by faith, not by sight.*¹¹¹

This is not the time for human wisdom and logical arguments. This is not the time to use the five senses so necessary for physical well-being. It is time to **walk by faith**. Allow God to instruct you; then respond in **sincere faith** to His teaching.¹¹²

In a dictionary that lists word origins, you'll find that "sincere" comes from two

¹¹¹2 Cor. 5:7.

¹¹²Read carefully 2 Tim. 1:5.

Latin terms: “sine” and “cere,” meaning “without wax.” In the ancient past a potter would often put his seal or stamp on a finished piece of pottery along with the words **sine cere**. This meant that, to his knowledge, there was no flaw in that vessel. If a potter did crack a pot, he would carefully patch that vessel by filling in the crack with wax. Then he would glaze it over. It didn’t merit the stamp **sine cere**, “without wax,” because it was not a flawless piece of pottery.

60

Let’s be sure that our faith is “without wax,” *sincere*, just like the faith that lived in Timothy, his grandmother, and his mother.

New Birth Is Radical Change

One must have an extraordinary change to receive eternal life. New birth is absolutely necessary; it is no small matter to become a new creation by the power of God! The

question, “What must I do to inherit eternal life?” must still be asked at this point in our study. Though you have believed in Jesus, repented of your sins, and made a conscious decision to follow Him, you have not yet received the gift of eternal life. Listen as Jesus talks to Nicodemus about this subject:

In reply Jesus declared, “I tell you the truth, unless a man is born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.” “How can a man be born when he is old?” Nicodemus asked. “Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother’s womb to be born!” Jesus answered, “I tell you the truth, unless a man is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.”¹¹³

The apostle Paul wrote:

¹¹³John 3:3-5.

*...if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation....*¹¹⁴

But what does it mean to be “born again” or to be “born of water and the Spirit”? The water and Spirit are the active agents in the new birth. Some think that the water points to one’s past physical birth and the Spirit to one’s spiritual rebirth. Yet, beginning in John 3:22, there is an example that combines the physical act of water baptism with the spiritual act of faith in Jesus. Please read it from your own Bible. The chapter closes with these words:

*“Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on him.”*¹¹⁵

A proof of one’s rejection of Jesus would be a refusal to be baptized.

¹¹⁴2 Cor. 5:17.

¹¹⁵John 3:36.

What Is Baptism?

Have you ever thought about how New Testament believers were baptized? Was it by sprinkling, pouring, or complete immersion? Does it really matter? Will just any ceremony be alright with God?

Instead of *translating* the Greek verb ‘*baptizo*’ (sink, bathe, dip, drown, or immerse—each one would be correct), it has been transliterated (made understandable in English by dropping the Greek ending and adding an English one) by most English translations.

63

Since baptism is like the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, immersion is the only method that agrees with the **likeness**. For when one is immersed, a literal burial in water and a literal raising **like** a resurrection from that burial occurs. Sprinkling or pouring water on a baptismal candidate (a widely

practiced method of baptism since the second century) does not fit the symbolism. Only burial or immersion in water completes the imagery.

In reflecting on the mode of sprinkling practiced in his day, the visual and doctrinal implications disturbed Martin Luther.

64

It is indeed correct to say that baptism is a washing away of sins, but the expression is too weak and mild to bring out the full significance of baptism which is rather a symbol of death and resurrection. For this reason I would have those who are to be baptized completely immersed in water as the Word says, and as the mystery indicates (Luther's Works, vol. 36, p. 68).¹¹⁶

¹¹⁶Quoted by F. LaGard Smith, *Baptism: The Believer's Wedding Ceremony* (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing, 1989), pp. 91-92. Smith, in this excellent work of 192 pages discusses, in a style that is enjoyable and easy to read, some of the complex issues like original sin and infant baptism. But he has put baptism in the beautiful biblical frame of God's grace and portrays its purpose and results in an

Jesus Sends the Apostles to Preach

*He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. Whoever believes **and is baptized** will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.”¹¹⁷*

To see the connection of “born again” with baptism, consider the results of this new birth. It puts one in the kingdom of God.¹¹⁸

65

The apostle Paul teaches us:

The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is

interesting way. I recommend that you read it.

¹¹⁷Mark 16:15-16.

¹¹⁸See John 3:3, 5.

*with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.*¹¹⁹

Baptism is into the body of Christ (His church-family).¹²⁰

It is the Holy Spirit who gives us life, a new birth,¹²¹ through our faith in Jesus, but He uses baptism (immersion in water) as the point when He does it. What is the result of
66 baptism? Or ask this question: “*God, why should I be baptized?*” Read the following Scriptures and fill in the blanks, asking God “**why?**” I’ll give you a couple of examples, then you complete the others.

¹¹⁹1 Cor. 12:12-13.

¹²⁰See. Col. 1:13, 18.

¹²¹See Titus 3:4-8.

Matthew 28:19 Disciples are to be baptized.
John 3:3, 5 Why? To enter the Kingdom of God.

Mark 16:16 Why? _____

Acts 2:38 Why? _____

Acts 8:35-39 Why? _____

Acts 22:16 Why? _____

Romans 6:3-6 Why? _____

1 Corinthians 12:13 Why? _____

Galatians 3:26, 27 Why? _____

Ephesians 5:25-27 Why? _____

Colossians 2:12, 13 Why? _____

Titus 3:4-8 Why? _____

1 Peter 3:19-21 Why? _____

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From the Scriptures above we learn that baptism (immersion in water, which is the **one Bible baptism**) is for believing disciples of Jesus; it saves those who believe; it is the means by which the Holy Spirit gives us a new birth into God's kingdom-family; it is God's stepping stone of grace to forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit to all who believe and repent; it brings joy into our lives because we know, at *the point of*

baptism, God saved us; it is to wash our sins away; it puts us into Christ where eternal life is received;¹²² it is a clothing in Christ; it is a washing and cleansing; it is a confirmation of our faith in God's power to raise us from a dead spiritual life to new life in Christ; it is a regeneration by the Holy Spirit; it is the initial point when God saves us and cleanses our consciences.

Baptism is a very important part of God's saving grace. It should not be a barrier preventing us from receiving the gift of the *eternal, life-giving* Holy Spirit. It is a humbling experience to be buried, totally submerged in a pool of water which in itself has no saving power. But we trust God to save us as we humble ourselves and meet with Jesus in baptism, confident that He will resurrect us to new life. Study this for yourself in Romans, chapter 6. Think about the two verses that follow very carefully:

¹²²See Rom. 6:3-4, 23.

*...having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead. When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins....*¹²³

In those verses, when did God make them alive? That is right—when they were raised with Jesus. Raised from what? **Baptism**. The **faith** of the one being baptized transforms **immersion** in water into Christian baptism.

69

Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. If we have been united with

¹²³Col. 2:12-13.

*him in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be rendered powerless, that we should no longer be slaves to sin....*¹²⁴

*For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*¹²⁵

70 What a blessing it is to be baptized/immersed by the Holy Spirit into the body of Christ and receive the gift of eternal life! No greater thrill can the human heart experience than to know that one is in a right relationship with the God of heaven. Have you come to know the joy of fellowship with the Lord God?

¹²⁴Rom. 6:3-6.

¹²⁵Rom. 6:23.

Responding To God's Gift: *Being Faithful*

This is the last step. It may be long or short. It will take the rest of your life to finish this step. It has different names. We might say in common language, "Keep on keeping on" or, "Don't quit" or, as Winston Churchill once told a graduating class at his alma mater: "Never, never, *never*—give up!" If we turn to the Bible, we will read words like these: "Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life."¹²⁶ 71

The Purpose of the New Testament Letters

The letters of the New Testament were written to help young Christian churches

¹²⁶Rev. 2:10; compare 2 Tim. 4:6-8.

mature in their faith. These letters need to be read by us today. From them we learn how God wants us to live in community with other believers. They teach us how to live in our world, as wicked and corrupt as it is, in a way that pleases God and blesses us. The following verses will serve as an example of what I mean.

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Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice,

slander, and filthy language from your lips. Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all. Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it

*all in the name of the Lord Jesus, and giving thanks to God the Father through him.*¹²⁷

As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called—one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. This is why it says: “When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men.” (What does “he ascended” mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the

*whole universe.) It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.*¹²⁸

¹²⁸Eph. 4:1-16.

You Will Have To Make a Choice

You must choose how you will live. You will have to make that all-important decision: to live or not to live in fellowship with the Lord and His people. Like Joshua (a judge in Israel) once said:

*"But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD."*¹²⁹

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We all make choices. Many of the decisions that we make can affect not only our own destiny but the destinies of our families and our nations. Joshua, a man of courage, made a wise choice.

¹²⁹Josh. 24:15.

What Then?

A granddad was talking with his grandson who was about to graduate from the twelfth grade ("high school"). He asked the boy, "What are you going to do now?" The boy replied, "Get a job and work this summer." "That's good, son; what then?" asked grandfather. The grandson said, "Then I'm going to college in the fall." "Great," was grandfather's reply. "What then?" The boy answered, "I want to study law and pass the bar exam and become a lawyer." "That's fine, what then?" said grandfather. "I want to become a judge," the boy retorted. "That's a good profession," grandfather encouraged. "What then?" "Well," responded the boy, "I'd like to become a Supreme Court justice." "That's wonderful; you have set for yourself a very noble and attainable goal," grandfather replied. "What then?" "Grandfather!" the young man retorted, "I'd be a justice until I died." "That's true son. *What then?*"

The young man had planned for his life on earth, but not for life eternal. His grandfather wanted him to see the other side of life—the most important side.

The Last Breath

78

When the fingers of death choke off your life's breath and death comes, *what then?* Will it be eternal life in heaven or will it be eternal separation from God in hell? The choice is yours. God has done everything He can to save your soul from eternal death. The Bible explains it in detail.¹³⁰

Approximately 5.5 billion of us live on this earth! Every few seconds another one of us is born. A newborn baby fills its lungs with its first breath of air and cries. Into the world of flesh and blood enters an *eternal* being. Name him/her Miro Smriga or

¹³⁰See Matt. 25:34-46.

Marcela Brissova, Mikail Gorbachev or Nataliya Poleschuk, Adolf Hitler or Eva Braun, George Bush or Jane Doe. Teach them to love and respect their Slovak heritage. Train them in the Marxist-Leninist philosophy of communism. Make them believe they are of the superior race and have them goose-step to "heil Hitler." Vote them into the presidency of their country. As a nation, a parent, or a peer, you have influenced them greatly.

They may become brilliant young adults 79 with a love of family and dedication to country. He may be a national reformer and a historical hero and she may be just a "cripple" looked upon as a second class citizen. He may become a defeated and disgraced dictator living in infamy among the worn pages of dusty old history books and she a voice of hope on the radio. He may become the leader of the most powerful nation in the world and she the name of the unknown or unnamed. People may wait on him hand and foot and thousands may queue

up for long distances to get his autograph; she may be the object of pity and benevolent help.

The Great Tragedy

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If they are not taught to know God, what a great tragedy! They will live far below the dignity of their eternal heritage and will be robbed, as if by a thief in the night, of their greatest treasure—the knowledge of their true parentage as God's sons and daughters, eternal beings created in the image of Jehovah God.¹³¹ Know this, parent; know this, society; know this, teacher of the youth of our nations: God will hold us accountable for the thinking of our children if we knowingly neglect to teach them about Him.¹³²

¹³¹ See Gen. 1:26-27.

¹³² Read carefully 2 Thess. 1:7-10.

*"And if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a large millstone tied around his neck."*¹³³

Please, don't deprive yourself, your children, relatives, friends, or even an enemy of the opportunity to read and study the Holy Bible. It is God's revelation of himself. In it, you can find the answers to those gnawing questions: "Who am I?" "Where did I come from?" "What is my purpose here?" "Where am I going?"

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The Bible Has the Answers

The Bible has changed me from a doubting, fearful, and frustrated person to a man of confident hope: I now believe that I will

¹³³Mark 9:42.

keep on living with God after I die. What I found through the study of the Bible is **eternal life in Jesus Christ**. That is exactly what Jesus promised in John 5:39-40. The search of the Scriptures should introduce us to Jesus, the one who can and will give us the gift of life.

The Real Pot of Gold

82 Life is a real treasure. Eternal life is a gift that God wants to give to you and the other 5.5 billion people on this planet. Unlike the mythical pot of gold at the end of the rainbow, there is a real gift, a “pot full of eternal life” found only in Jesus Christ. Now is the time to make a decision about eternal life. Will you accept this gift? Jesus wants to give it to you right now. It is available; it is free; but it will cost you a life of devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ.

*That if you confess with your mouth,
“Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your*

heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. ¹³⁴

What must you do to be saved and receive the gift of eternal life? Read Acts 2:38 again, please: “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

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Ananias, God’s appointed messenger, told Saul, who later became the apostle Paul, “And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name” (Acts 22:16). I’m asking you the same question, “What are you waiting for?” I’m telling you what God would tell you, “Get up and be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name.”

¹³⁴Rom. 10:9-10.

Now is the only time you have. Tomorrow may never come. You'll never get good enough for God to save you. You may need to know more, but if you know enough to believe in Jesus as your Lord and Savior and enough to repent of your sins and make a decision to follow Christ, then you know enough now. If someone or some things are standing in your way, they should not hold such power over you. Jesus wants only those who want Him with their whole hearts.¹³⁵

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The Truth About Life

If you have been searching for meaning and purpose in life through education (science, philosophy, meditations, human intelligence), recreation, pleasure, building projects, family or whatever else it may be, without God at the center of your focus,

¹³⁵See Rom. 6:17; 12:1-2; read carefully Luke 9:23; 14:25-33.

confusion and frustration will ultimately be the result. Read Ecclesiastes (in your Bible). It is written by the wisest man in all the history of the world, King Solomon. His conclusion, after investigating life's mysteries, accomplishments, and pleasures, was that man's full responsibility is to respect God and keep His commands.¹³⁶

It is in God that we find the truth about life. I have arrived at the same conclusion through fifty-four years of living, from studying, by observing life, and through the evidences that make up my faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of God.¹³⁷

¹³⁶ See Eccl. 12:13.

¹³⁷ Read the booklet, *Jesus of Nazareth: Is He Really God's Son?* by William M. Bean. Write for it at Life Communications. Also, may I highly recommend the book, *The Eternal Purpose and Plan of God*, by Larry Deason with Bill Bean (Clifton Park, NY: Life Communications, 1990). For those who cannot afford these materials, they can be made available free of charge.

Look to Jesus

To Him be the glory and the praise for all that we are and for anything that we do in His name. Without Him we could do nothing, but with Him all things are possible. If this booklet has blessed your life, then praise Jesus for it. It is because of Him, and by His saving grace, and for His glory that it has been written.

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*For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*¹³⁸

*For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*¹³⁹

¹³⁸Rom. 6:23.

¹³⁹John 3:16.

Summary

The Best Offer of Your Life

Jesus is offering you the gift of eternal life. Accept it. Receive this precious gift of life. It will give you a peaceful calm, even in the most difficult times. You will not just cope with life; you will flourish in it. God will see to it. Faith in God and confidence in your personal salvation through the gift of eternal life are far too important to leave to chance. *Receive the gift today.* Follow the steps you have learned in this study—from the Bible. The Bible is the only authority we have in religious matters. God caused it to be written so we might know we have eternal life. 87

Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and

*that by believing you may have life in his name.*¹⁴⁰

*I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.*¹⁴¹

Be Faithful Unto Death

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May God be with you and bless you with growth as a newborn baby Christian. Fellowship with other Christians is absolutely important. Write to us and we will try to put you in contact with people in your area who are simply Christians like you. If you have been born again of the water and the Spirit, then by that same Spirit you were baptized into the *one* body of Christ, which

¹⁴⁰John 20:30-31.

¹⁴¹1 John 5:13.

is His church.¹⁴² The gift of eternal life is now your present possession.¹⁴³ Be faithful and keep the gift. If you prove to be unfaithful, God will take it back.¹⁴⁴ So be faithful unto death and receive the crown of eternal life.

Choose to Live!

Enter into a new life of love, joy, and peace in the Holy Spirit. Live. Live as a newborn son or daughter of God should live: confidently, in service to and at peace with your fellowman. 89

Observe the golden rule:

¹⁴²See John 3:3-5; 1 Cor. 12:13.

¹⁴³See John 5:24.

¹⁴⁴Read carefully Gal. 5:4; 2 Peter 2:20-22; Heb. 6:4-6.

*"In everything, do to others what you would have them do to you...."*¹⁴⁵

Seek to know God through continuous Bible study, prayer, and humble Christian service.

Christian Fellowship a Must

90 Associate yourself with a group of immersed believers who also are members of the one body of Christ. I have chosen to fellowship with the churches of Christ. We are a group of people who are trying to restore New Testament Christianity without the shackles of human creeds and suppressive and unbiblical church hierarchies. The local church rules itself with Jesus as its only head. We are a group of people who believe that the Bible is the first and last court of appeal in all religious matters.

¹⁴⁵Matt. 7:12.

Let the Scriptures guide you into all truth. Truth will set you free indeed.¹⁴⁶ The Scriptures can bring you to saving faith in Jesus Christ. The choice is yours. Choose wisely. Choose for eternity. Choose to live and not die. If you don't live it, you don't believe it. "Unbelief puts our circumstances between us and God, but faith puts God between us and our circumstances" (F.B. Meyer).

Our Original Question

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"If a man dies, will he live again?"

The Bible answer is a resounding "yes," but *only* in Christ.¹⁴⁷ In Christ is the realm

¹⁴⁶ Write to Life Communications for the booklet, *Set Free? Stay Free!* by Larry Deason (Clifton Park, NY: Life Communications, 1993).

¹⁴⁷ See Col. 2:12-14; 3:1-4; Eph. 1:3-7; 2:13; 2 Cor. 5:17.

where life is found. There is only death and separation from God outside of Christ.¹⁴⁸ Be sure that you are in Christ and that you stay in Him for the rest of your life. If you die before He comes again, He will resurrect you at His coming; if you are alive when He comes, He will change your body and you will keep on living forever and ever with Him.¹⁴⁹

*And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.*¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁸ See John 5:28-29; 2 Cor. 5:10; 2 Thess. 1:7-10; Luke 16:19-31.

¹⁴⁹ See John 11:25-26; 14:1-6; 1 Thess. 4:13-5:10; 1 Cor. 15:1-58.

¹⁵⁰ 1 John 5:11-12.

Appreciation

Thank you for reading this book. I realize time is very valuable. I appreciate you taking the time. My hope and prayer is that through this study you have come to know Jesus as Lord and Savior. This prepares you to repent and be baptized. When you do, God will give you His gift of eternal life by His Holy Spirit taking up residence in your body.¹⁵¹

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Contact Us If You Want Additional Help or Information

I hope the Bible research in this volume will help you as a reference for further study. If you have questions about this

¹⁵¹ See Rom. 8:1-16; would you stop and read this now please? It is very important. Note especially v.6: "...the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace...."

material or the subject of eternal life as taught in the Bible, please contact us at Life Communications. We will respond to your questions. Distribution of accurate, biblical material that communicates the love of God seen in Jesus Christ is our commitment to you.

Yours sincerely, “without wax”, in search of eternal life in Jesus, our most high God—

94 *Bobby G. Deason*

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