

# "THE PROPHETIC WORD"

## ETERNAL LIFE

IS  
ETERNAL LIFE  
A  
PRESENT  
POSSESSION?

IS  
ETERNAL LIFE  
A  
PROMISED  
POSSESSION?

**"...LAY HOLD ON ETERNAL LIFE, TO WHICH YOU WERE ALSO CALLED...  
...KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS, WHO ALONE HAS IMMORTALITY,  
DWELLING IN UNAPPROACHABLE LIGHT, WHOM NO MAN HAS SEEN OR CAN SEE,  
TO WHOM BE HONOR AND EVERLASTING POWER. AMEN."** 1 Tim. 6:12-16 excerpts

When it comes to the subject of eternal life, we live in times in which men say things other than what the apostle Paul spoke about this subject. Paul is writing to Timothy, his true son in the faith (1 Tim. 1:2). It is in this same epistle, that he exhorts Timothy, "Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity...do not neglect the gift that is in you...by the laying on of hands of the presbytery...take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you" (1 Tim.4:12-16). Such exhortation that Paul gives to his young protégé is foreign theology in Christianity today. Rather than following the likes of Paul's words, everything pertaining to salvation is stated to be a completed act, a done deal, a thing of the past, that is now considered to be a present possession of the believer.

Now look carefully at the opening text above from 1 Timothy 6:12-16. Paul makes two references to the subject of this newsletter, namely, "eternal life" and "immortality." Paul is not in harmony with today's popular salvation clichés, "once saved, always saved" or "unconditional eternal security", but rather reminds Timothy of the need to "...lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called." Timothy is a born-again believer like you and me, is he not? Why does Paul not view eternal life as a present possession of the believer as so many teach today?

Secondly, as Paul begins now to describe the majesty of Jesus Christ in these verses, he clarifies that it is Jesus "...who alone has immortality." However, this is not the modern-day perspective on this subject. There is today a tenacious defense of eternal life and immortality as being a present possession belonging the believer. Since Paul wrote two-thirds of the New Testament epistles, we should take note that he teaches Timothy just the opposite of what is being taught today.

I believe Paul's teachings such as he gave to Timothy have become foreign theology today because we are not viewing the subject of salvation in its completeness. Salvation is not a totally completed process based just on the initial act of conversion, as widely believed, but rather is an ongoing, progressive unfolding of salvation coming to the complete man that God created: man with a spirit, a soul, and a physical body. So important is a proper understanding of salvation that I am going to repeat two pages from last month's newsletter for you review:

## SALVATION IS A PROGRESSIVE ACTION

When God created Adam, we find these words describing what God created:

**“AND THE LORD GOD FORMED MAN OF THE DUST OF THE GROUND, ← (body)  
AND BREATHED INTO HIS NOSTRILS THE BREATH OF LIFE; ← (spirit)  
AND MAN BECAME A LIVING SOUL” ← (soul)**

Gen. 2:7

Man is a **SPIRIT**, he possess a **SOUL**, and he lives in a **PHYSICAL BODY**.  
We find this confirmation spoken by the apostle Paul when he said,

**“ NOW MAY THE GOD OF PEACE HIMSELF, SANCTIFY YOU COMPLETELY;  
AND MAY YOUR WHOLE SPIRIT, SOUL AND BODY BE PRESERVED BLAMELESS  
AT THE COMING OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.  
HE WHO CALLS YOU IS FAITHFUL, WHO ALSO WILL DO IT.”**

1 Thess. 5:23-24

**HOW** Jesus is going to sanctify us completely (spirit, soul and body) is by means of who He is. Jesus has a threefold revelation of Himself presented in Scripture that is the means by which He will “save” the believer totally (spirit, soul and body). Here is that revelation:

**“LET NOT YOUR HEART BE TROUBLED; YOU BELIEVE IN GOD, BELIEVE ALSO IN ME. IN MY FATHER'S  
HOUSE ARE MANY MANSIONS; IF IT WERE NOT SO, I WOULD HAVE TOLD YOU. I GO TO PREPARE A  
PLACE FOR YOU. AND IF I GO AND PREPARE A PLACE FOR YOU, I WILL COME AGAIN AND RECEIVE  
YOU TO MYSELF; THAT WHERE I AM, THERE YOU MAY BE ALSO. AND WHERE I GO YOU KNOW, AND  
THE WAY YOU KNOW. THOMAS SAID TO HIM, ‘LORD, WE DO NOT KNOW WHERE YOU ARE GOING,  
AND HOW CAN WE KNOW THE WAY?’ JESUS SAID TO HIM,  
‘I AM THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE.  
NO ONE COMES TO THE FATHER EXCEPT THROUGH ME.’ ”**

John 14:1-6

**“WHERE  
I GO YOU  
KNOW,  
AND  
YOU KNOW  
THE WAY.**



**I AM  
THE WAY,  
THE TRUTH,  
AND  
THE LIFE.”**

**BEGINS IN  
THE SPIRIT**

**“I AM THE WAY”**

**WORKED OUT IN  
THE SOUL**

**“I AM THE TRUTH”**

**FINALIZED IN  
THE BODY**

**“I AM THE LIFE”**

**NO ONE COMES TO THE FATHER EXCEPT THROUGH ME”**

Jn. 14:46

The salvation process begins in the spirit, it is then worked out in the soul, and will only be finalized in the body, in the future, at the appointed day of the resurrection from the dead, when the believer's body that lies in the grave is finally resurrected.

How is Jesus going to show the way? It is not restricted to just Jesus being “the way” via the new birth. Rather it is a progressive unfolding to the believer of Jesus Christ first as “the way”, then as “the truth”, and finally as “the life”. Salvation is an ongoing progressive process in the life of the believer, just as Jesus’ revelation of Himself is an ongoing, progression of revelation to be applied in the redemption of the believer. Salvation first comes to the spirit, then it is worked out in the soul, and finally will be manifested in the resurrected (or raptured) body of those for whom Christ died. Altogether, this is “salvation”, and is best expressed by the concept of “being saved”. For instance, how can you say that “I have been saved” when your body is yet to be “saved” by means of resurrection or rapture? (Rom. 8:23-25) This stated “salvation” of the body is the final act of salvation. Everything pertaining to salvation was not completed in the initial act of the new birth. There is more to come.

## PAST

### SALVATION BEGINS IN THE SPIRIT

**“...THAT WHICH IS  
BORN OF THE SPIRIT  
IS SPIRIT...  
“YOU MUST  
BE BORN AGAIN.”**

Jn. 3:5-7

We know that the event known as the “new birth” is when salvation first comes to man. To what part of man does salvation come, the total man (spirit, soul and body) or to a portion of man as God created him? Jesus specifically tells us what happens at the new birth.

What is “born again” is the spirit of man. However, the spirit is not the complete expression of a man, is it? Man is spirit, possesses a soul, and lives in a body, all of which God intends to “sanctify completely” as we saw earlier in 1 Thess. 5:23-24.

God works in man from the inside to the outside. Life must begin with a transformation of his degenerate spirit by the Spirit of the living God (see Rom. 8:15-16). here man receives the first definition of grace that we studied earlier, “Divine influence upon the heart.”

However, as you also remember there is a second manifestation of God’s grace that must follow, “and its reflection in the life”, which brings us to the second phase of God’s plan of salvation: bringing restoration to the soul of the born again Christian. This is not a finished product of the new birth.

## PRESENT

### SALVATION IS WORKED OUT IN THE SOUL

**“...RECEIVING  
THE END  
OF YOUR FAITH-  
THE SALVATION OF  
YOUR SOULS...”**

1 Pet. 1:9

**“WE ARE NOT OF THOSE  
WHO DRAW BACK TO  
PERDITION, BUT OF THOSE  
WHO BELIEVE TO THE  
SAVING OF THE SOUL”**

Heb. 10:39

**“...WORK OUT YOUR  
OWN SALVATION WITH  
FEAR AND TREMBLING,  
FOR IT IS GOD  
WHO WORKS IN YOU  
BOTH TO WILL AND DO  
OF HIS GOOD PLEASURE...”**

Phil. 2:12-13

Notice when the apostle Peter declares that salvation comes to “the soul”! It is at **THE END** of your faith, rather than a thing achieved at the the beginning via the act of the new birth! Remember earlier I showed you that your “Faith without works is a dead faith” and that grace received in your heart is now to have a “reflection in the life.” The new birth is to be followed with an outward manifestation of a new life! That is why Paul states, “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new” (2 Cor. 5:17).

Likewise, the apostle Paul places the saving of the soul as a goal set before the Christian, not as an event that took place at the new birth. Notice, too, that Paul believed that a Christian could go backwards all the way to perdition (“eternal misery”).

Dear Christian, **IF** you accept that faith is to be **EVIDENCED** by works, and **IF** you believe God is looking for an outward reflection of His grace **EVIDENCED** in your life, then you can fully understand this difficult verse penned by the apostle Paul instructing the believer to “work out your own salvation” as God “works in you” to will and do of His good pleasure! God expects His “sheep” to submit to the “restoration of the soul” as stated in Psalm 23:3. God expects His people to “be renewed in the spirit of their mind” in order that they may **PROVE** (demonstrate) what is the “good... acceptable...perfect will of God” (Rom. 12:2).

God expects His people to “put off the man which grows corrupt according to its deceitful lusts” and to “put on the new man which is created in righteousness and true holiness” (Eph. 4:22-24). Do you really believe all these things happened at the new birth, or are they an ongoing, progressive action taken by the born-again believer as he/she submits to the working of the Spirit of Grace (the Holy Spirit) sent by God to finish the work Christ has begun. Paul states, “Be confident of this very thing, that He who has **BEGUN** a good work in you shall **COMPLETE** it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Phil.1:6). We are to look to Jesus as the **AUTHOR** and **FINISHER** of our faith” (Heb.12:2). Can you not see the absolute folly of espousing clever clichés like “once saved-always saved,” when God still has so much “salvation” to complete in us? Are we indeed “eternally secure” if we in essence only allow God to do the initial work of bringing salvation to our spirit by means of the new birth?

**FUTURE**

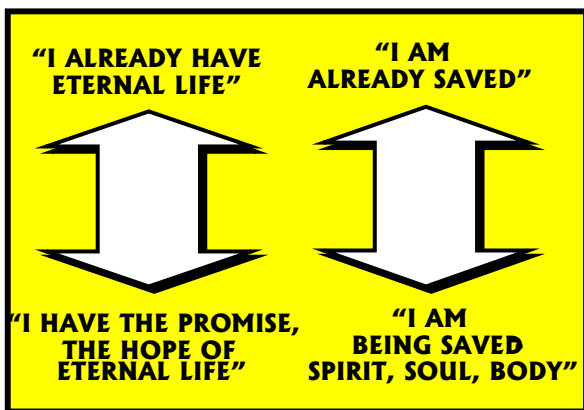
**FINALIZED  
IN THE BODY**

**“...EAGERLY WAITING  
FOR THE ADOPTION,  
THE REDEMPTION  
OF OUR BODY...  
FOR WE ARE SAVED  
IN THIS HOPE”**  
Rom. 8:23-24

**“...WHEN THIS MORTAL  
HAS PUT ON  
IMMORTALITY...”**  
1 Cor. 15:54

**“YOU SHALL NOT ADD TO THE WORD WHICH  
I HAVE COMMANDED YOU, NOR TAKE  
ANYTHING FROM IT, THAT YOU MAY KEEP  
THE COMMANDMENTS OF THE LORD YOUR  
GOD WHICH I COMMAND YOU.”**

Deut. 4:2



This is the final act of our salvation. It is the resurrection (or rapture) of the body of the believer. This is not a finished work, but a future work. In October’s newsletter, I was a pleading with you to avoid intentionally cremating the body, but rather to plant it as a seed in the ground as Paul plainly argues in 1 Cor. 15.

Read carefully these two scriptures in their contextual setting as I lack the space to print them. At the appropriate moment, Jesus Christ Himself will raise the bodies of Christians from the grave. It is at this moment that **THE BODY** will put on **IMMORTALITY** (“eternal life”). The spirit and the soul are **ETERNAL**, but the body has not yet put on eternal life. That is why we are “being saved”, because the process is not yet finished! Saying all that as preliminary instruction, I now want to talk to you about the doctrine of eternal life.

If you endorse a gospel that adds to God’s Word then you are in danger of keeping the commandments of men – things added to the Word of God. Today’s version of the gospel teaches salvation as a past-tense, completed event. There are teachers who major in drilling home the point that the born-again believer has already received eternal life. Is that true? Is that really what the Scriptures teach? Does the believer possess eternal life or is it given to the believer in the form of a promise and a hope for the future?

This is an enormously important question to answer properly. Equally emphasized by the wide-gate and broad-way gospel is the emphatic declaration of salvation being a completed task. Is this what the Scriptures teach, or do they present salvation as an on-going, progressive action that begins in the spirit, progresses to the soul, and is yet-to-be finalized in the body through the resurrection of the dead? This, too, is a vitally important question to consider.

Both of these positions cannot be true. Only one is according to what is written in God’s Word. Either eternal life is a present possession in the life of the believer or it is a promised possession that will take place in eternity. Multitudes of believers are endorsing the “once saved-always saved” concept because of the belief that they already possess eternal life; and if it is eternal, then they can never lose it. It is a doctrine that sounds good, but it is not sound doctrine! These concepts are “sand theology” (Mat. 7:26). These are the teachings of man replacing the rock foundational teachings of Christ (Mat. 7:25).

Let us begin to examine what the Scriptures teach about when and how the believer receives eternal life.

With this text in mind, that every fact is established in the mouth of two or three witnesses, let us examine the recorded witness that the Scriptures bear pertaining to the subject of when one receives eternal life. There are 15 pertinent passages in the New Testament using the words eternal life and 10 verses using the phrase everlasting life. About half of both categories are repetitive passages which you can (and should) verify for yourself. Let us look at 10 of those passages which convey different aspects and qualifying content that shed light on the subject of when the believer will inherit eternal/everlasting life. You might be in for a shock, for the Scriptures do not convey the likes of what is being presented by the wide-gate and broad-way gospel.

Let us begin with Paul who wrote two-thirds of the New Testament. Let us consider what Paul spoke to Timothy, his "true son in the faith" (1 Tim.1:2). I stress this point about Timothy because Paul, by making such a statement, confirms that Timothy is a born-again believer. In the opening of this epistle Paul calls Timothy "my true son in the faith" (1:2). His closing words in this same epistle to this "man of God" is to "lay hold on eternal life to which you were called" (6:11-12).

**1<sup>st</sup> Witness:**

**" BUT YOU  
O MAN OF GOD...  
FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT  
OF FAITH,  
LAY HOLD ON  
ETERNAL LIFE,  
TO WHICH  
YOU WERE ALSO CALLED..."**  
1 Tim. 6:11-12

We must ask ourselves why it is that Paul would speak to Timothy, his "true son in the faith", telling him to "lay hold on eternal life" if he already possessed it, as the modern-day version of the gospel proclaims takes place at the new birth? Timothy is not only born-again, but he is an apostle and is pastoring the church at Ephesus.

As a born-again believer, Timothy is told by Paul to lay hold on eternal life by fighting the good fight of faith just as Paul did (2<sup>nd</sup> Tim. 4:7). That is also a message for the born-again believer today. These passages of Paul to Timothy make perfect sense if we realize that the Scripture presents eternal life as a hope and a promise rather than a present possession! Otherwise, Paul's words to Timothy make no sense whatever if he already possessed eternal life as proclaimed today. There is more.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Witness:**

**" ...COMMAND THOSE WHO  
ARE RICH...  
LET THEM DO GOOD, THAT  
THEY MAY BE RICH IN GOOD  
WORKS, WILLING TO SHARE,  
STORING UP FOR THEMSELVES  
A GOOD FOUNDATION FOR  
THE TIME TO COME,  
THAT THEY MAY  
LAY HOLD  
ON ETERNAL LIFE."**  
1 Tim. 6:17-19

In this very same epistle Paul begins to exhort the believers who are rich to also "lay hold on eternal life." Notice the reference to the future, "for the time to come" that they may lay hold on eternal life.

Why, we must again ask, is Paul placing eternal life in the future tense rather than in the past tense as does the wide-gate and broad-way gospel?

Paul gives many more witnesses in his other epistles that eternal life is a future expectation. Let us consider more of what he has to say.

**3<sup>rd</sup> Witness:**

**" ...ACCORDING TO THE  
FAITH OF GOD'S ELECT...  
IN HOPE OF  
ETERNAL LIFE  
WHICH GOD,  
WHO CANNOT LIE, PROMISED  
BEFORE TIME BEGAN."**  
Titus 1:1-2

Here in Paul's epistle to Titus, he opens by referring to eternal life as (1) a future hope and (2) as a promise. We know a promise is different from a possession. We possess the promise, not what is in it.

Paul defines hope for us as:

**"FOR WE ARE SAVED IN THIS HOPE, BUT HOPE THAT IS SEEN IS NOT HOPE; FOR WHY DOES ONE STILL HOPE FOR WHAT HE SEES? BUT IF WE HOPE FOR WHAT WE DO NOT SEE, THEN WE EAGERLY WAIT FOR IT WITH PERSEVERANCE."**  
Rom. 8:24-25

Paul's definition of hope is in perfect alignment with eternal life being stated as a hope. Paul would not call eternal life a "hope" if it were a present possession.

By the time you reach Paul's concluding thoughts in this same epistle, he emphatically stresses that we are not saved by works of righteousness which we have done, but rather that we are justified by God's grace and therefore have become heirs of the hope of eternal life. Notice the phrase here is identical to the one he made earlier in this same epistle.

5<sup>th</sup> Witness:

**"BUT NOW HAVING BEEN  
SET FREE FROM SIN, AND  
HAVING BECOME SLAVES  
OF GOD, YOU HAVE  
YOUR FRUIT TO  
HOLINESS,**

**AND THE END,  
EVERLASTING  
LIFE.**

**FOR THE WAGES OF SIN  
IS DEATH, BUT THE GIFT  
OF GOD IS ETERNAL LIFE  
IN CHRIST JESUS OUR  
LORD."**

Rom. 6:22-23

Let us consider now what Paul spoke to the believers in his epistle to the Romans pertaining to eternal life.

This is a classic case in which the modern-day gospel misuses the Word of God in subtle ways. To make the point, read these two verses together. Now just read Verse 23 apart from Verse 22.

There is nothing wrong with what is stated in Verse 23, but the connecting word "for" tells you that it is a continuing thought of the Verse above it (22).

We have no justifiable basis for separating Verse 22 from Verse 23. However, when this is done, an isolated "proof text" is used for the present possession of the gift of eternal life. However, the contextual setting of Verse 22 tells us specifically **WHEN** "everlasting life" will be received as a gift from God: "and the end, everlasting life."

What does Paul place as the emphasis for "now"? It is in Verse 22 which leads into Verse 23. He exhorts the believer that, having been set free from sin (by the new birth), he is "now" to become a slave of God who brings forth the fruit of holiness in this present life. Then at "the end, everlasting life" will be his. This is a call to discipleship. What Paul presents above is the "full gospel." He states what should be the present emphasis of a believer. It is to be a willing bond slave of Jesus Christ who has set him free from the bondage of sin! The present emphasis is to be that of bringing forth fruits of holiness (Hagimos-sanctification). The modern-day gospel has severed this confronting present priority of holiness in favor of giving a present emphasis to the comforting "gift of eternal life in Christ Jesus." This is separating the conditions from the promise, is it not? Having been set free from sin, we are to live in this life as believers fulfilling God's present call of holiness unto the Lord with a visionary eye upon the end, everlasting life!

Watch carefully for any presentation and use of this verse of Scripture (Rom. 6:23) in tracts and preaching. I will dare say that you will rarely find it kept in context with the connecting verse which states that eternal life comes at the end, not in the beginning, as the modern-day gospel conveys. I cannot overstate to you the importance of considering Scripture in context!

6<sup>th</sup> Witness:

**"...HE WHO SOWS TO  
THE SPIRIT  
WILL OF THE  
SPIRIT REAP  
EVERLASTING  
LIFE.**

**AND LET US NOT  
GROW WEARY...**

**IN DUE  
SEASON WE  
SHALL REAP  
IF WE DO NOT LOSE  
HEART."**

Gal. 6:8-9

The Sixth Chapter of Paul's letter to the Galatians is written to the brethren (6:1). The exhortation of Paul is "let us (the believers) not grow weary." He includes himself in this picture of those who will "reap in due season if we do not lose heart." What will they reap in due season? The context tells us: those who sow to the Spirit will reap of the Spirit everlasting life. Paul does not convey to the Galatians that they have already reaped eternal life, does he?

Conversely, Paul warns believers not to be deceived, for if they sow to the flesh they will reap of their flesh corruption:

**"DO NOT BE DECEIVED, GOD IS NOT MOCKED;  
FOR WHATEVER A MAN SOWS, THAT HE WILL ALSO REAP.  
FOR 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." Gal. 6:7-8**

No promise given here by the apostle Paul of "once saved-always saved", nor is a brand of "unconditional eternal security" guaranteed the believer who continues to live a carnal lifestyle; but rather, a sober warning that the believer will reap exactly what he sows.

So far we have considered seven Scriptures found in five different epistles of Paul that bear witness that eternal life comes at the end and not the beginning of our salvation. Paul is consistent in his preaching to all the churches. There is no room for misinterpretation when his teaching spans five different epistles written at different times. Paul taught that eternal life is a hope and a promise for the future.

7<sup>th</sup> Witness:

**" ...HE IS THE MEDIATOR  
OF THE NEW COVENANT BY  
MEANS OF DEATH...THAT  
THOSE WHO ARE CALLED  
MAY RECEIVE**

**THE PROMISE  
OF THE  
ETERNAL  
INHERITANCE. "**

Hebrews 9:15

If Paul authored the Book of Hebrews (which I believe he did), then again we find him carefully referring to our eternal inheritance as being a promise rather than a present possession. If Paul did not author this epistle, then whoever did is preaching exactly what Paul taught pertaining to eternal life; namely, that it is a promise rather than a possession.



Among those who taught that eternal life is a future possession and not a present one was Jesus Himself. May I remind you that Acts 3:22-23 warns:

**"THE LORD YOUR GOD WILL RAISE UP FOR YOU A  
PROPHET LIKE ME FROM YOUR BRETHREN. HIM YOU  
SHALL HEAR IN ALL THINGS, WHATEVER HE SAYS TO YOU.  
AND IT SHALL COME TO PASS THAT EVERY SOUL WHO WILL  
NOT HEAR THAT PROPHET SHALL BE UTTERLY DESTROYED  
FROM AMONG THE PEOPLE."**

8<sup>th</sup> Witness:

**"ASSUREDLY, I SAY UNTO YOU,  
THERE IS NO ONE WHO HAS LEFT  
HOUSE OR BROTHERS OR SISTERS  
OR FATHER OR MOTHER OR WIFE  
OR CHILDREN OR LANDS, FOR MY  
SAKE AND THE GOSPEL'S,  
WHO SHALL NOT RECEIVE  
A HUNDREDFOLD NOW  
IN THIS TIME --  
HOUSES AND BROTHERS AND  
SISTERS AND MOTHERS AND  
CHILDREN AND LANDS,  
WITH PERSECUTIONS -  
AND  
IN THE AGE TO COME,  
ETERNAL LIFE."**

Mark 10:29-30

Let us consider these very precise words that Jesus spoke pertaining to eternal life.

Just as Paul did in Romans 6:22-23, Jesus, in these passages, states the inheritance for the present and the future.

What will the believer receive "in this time?" Jesus said it would be "houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions." That is how He described the Christian life "in this time." Then He tells us what will be received by the believer "in the age to come." It is eternal life! Again, we must see that what is being said by the wide-gate and broad-way gospel is not in agreement with what Jesus says.



Jesus, who is the Word of God, the one who commissioned Paul to write two-thirds of the New Testament epistles, says in essence, as does Paul, that eternal life is a promise and a hope for "the age to come." It is not conveyed as a present possession, but a future possession.

No where does either Jesus or Paul present eternal life as a present possession. Yes, it is a gift, a free gift, but it is given to the "heirs of the hope of eternal life." Clearly we need to deal with this issue of when a believer receives eternal life as a possession. Scripture emphatically tells us it is a hope and a promise for the future. Let us consider two more witnesses.

9<sup>th</sup> Witness:

**"BUT YOU, BELOVED, BUILDING YOURSELVES UP ON YOUR MOST HOLY FAITH, PRAYING IN THE SPIRIT, KEEP YOURSELVES IN THE LOVE OF GOD, LOOKING FOR THE MERCY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST**

**UNTO ETERNAL LIFE."**

JUDE 20-21

Let us now consider two other apostles who bear the same confirming witness as Paul and Jesus that eternal life is a hope and a promise for the future rather than a present possession.

Even in this brief epistle by the apostle Jude, we find him exhorting believers that eternal life is something we are looking forward to receiving rather than it being a present possession.

10<sup>th</sup> Witness:

**"AND THIS IS THE PROMISE THAT HE HAS PROMISED US -- ETERNAL LIFE.**

**THESE THINGS I HAVE WRITTEN TO YOU CONCERNING THOSE WHO TRY TO DECEIVE YOU."**

1 Jn. 2:25-26

Our last witness is the apostle John.

Note that he also confirms that eternal life is a promise that God has given us rather than a present possession. Notice that, in context, he is warning against those who would "try to deceive you." I believe this is a prophetic forewarning by the apostle John of what was going to happen to the doctrine of eternal life.



Let us add to this verse from Chapter 2 of John's epistle in which he states eternal life to be a promise, these additional verses found in Chapter 5 of the same epistle:

**"...AND 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 LIFE. THESE THINGS I HAVE WRITTEN TO YOU...THAT YOU MAY KNOW THAT YOU HAVE ETERNAL LIFE, AND THAT YOU MAY CONTINUE TO BELIEVE IN THE NAME OF THE SON OF GOD."**

1 Jn. 5:11-13

Here in 1 John 5:11-13 is a Scripture that certainly appears to convey quite plainly that eternal life is a present possession of the believer, does it not? However, it must be isolated by itself to do so. John has already told us in the Chapter 2 of this same epistle that he considers eternal life to be a promise rather than a possession. Has he now changed his mind in these verses from chapter 5? Hardly, for this is an epistle (a letter) meant to be properly interpreted by its total context. He does not make one point in Chapter 2 and then reverse his thinking in Chapter 5.

So far we have seen a consistent harmonious view of eternal life presented by the apostle Paul, by Jesus Himself, as well as Jude and the apostle John. In spite of this consistent flow of verses that call eternal life a future hope and a promise, it is these verses in 1 John 5:11-13 that are singled out and used by those who wish to "prove" that eternal life is a present possession. The other verses are merely ignored because they don't harmonize with the popular concept being taught. For many, this is the "proof text" that says it all very plainly, but does it really? Let us dissect what John is saying in these verses. Perhaps we can see a whole different meaning that is in perfect harmony with all that we have considered so far.



**IS THIS A  
MESSAGE  
ABOUT YOU?**

**"...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 LIFE.**

**THESE THINGS I HAVE WRITTEN TO YOU...  
THAT YOU MAY KNOW  
THAT YOU HAVE ETERNAL LIFE,**

**AND THAT YOU MAY CONTINUE TO BELIEVE IN  
THE NAME OF THE SON OF GOD."**

1 Jn. 5:11-13



**OR IS THIS A  
MESSAGE  
ABOUT JESUS  
IN YOU?**

First of all, note that this verse does not say "God has given us eternal life" - period, but rather the sentence goes on to clarify what John means by this statement. He adds, "and this life is in His Son." What does that mean? Eternal life is still a promise in John's theology. He is not contradicting what he has said previously in Chapter 2. To have the Son means we have the promise of eternal life abiding in us in the in-dwelling presence of Jesus Christ. Where you find eternal life stated in a possessive way, you will also find following it a phrase stating in some form or another that Christ abides in us. Here is an example:

**"...CHRIST IN YOU, THE HOPE OF GLORY."** Col. 1:27

Jesus is the **HOPE** of glory that abides in us! In Titus 2:13 Paul exhorts the believer to be looking for the appearance of "the blessed **HOPE**." Why is eternal life presented as a hope and a promise? Because Jesus is "**THE HOPE OF GLORY--THE BLESSED HOPE**." and all the promises of God are in Christ Jesus (2<sup>nd</sup> Cor. 1:20). God has not given us eternal life as a possessive gift apart from the inward presence of His Son. Jesus said of Himself "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live" (Jn. 11:25). If we indeed already possess eternal life, then why must we still die? Eternal life cannot die, can it? We die because eternal life is a promise for the afterlife, not for this present life. What is behind the dogma of the broad-way proclamation of presently possessing eternal life is the false doctrine of "once saved-always saved." The argument goes "Eternal life is eternal, and I have that which is eternal." No, you have **A PROMISE AND A HOPE OF ETERNAL LIFE** according to the Scriptures! Advocates of "once saved-always saved" and "unconditional eternal security" like to use as their primary "proof text" Paul's words pertaining to "the sealing of the believer" by the Holy Spirit. Let us look carefully at that passage and see what it really says:

**"IN HIM YOU ALSO TRUSTED, AFTER YOU HEARD THE WORD OF TRUTH,  
THE GOSPEL OF YOUR SALVATION; IN WHOM ALSO, HAVING BELIEVED,  
YOU WERE SEALED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT OF PROMISE,  
WHO IS  
THE GUARANTEE OF OUR INHERITANCE UNTIL  
THE REDEMPTION OF THE PURCHASED POSSESSION,  
TO THE PRAISE OF HIS GLORY."**

Eph 1:13-14

Notice it is the Holy Spirit of **PROMISE** that is at work. When will it be fulfilled? When it is time for **THE REDEMPTION OF THE PURCHASED POSSESSION**". That is talking about the resurrection from the dead of the believer's body! It is a **PROMISE** for the future because it cannot be a present possession prior to the event that raises the dead. Paul, in another epistle states this very clearly:

**"...WE ALSO WHO HAVE THE FIRSTFRUITS OF THE SPIRIT, EVEN WE OURSELVES GROAN WITHIN  
OURSELVES, EAGERLY WAITING FOR THE ADOPTION, THE REDEMPTION OF OUR BODY. FOR  
WE WERE SAVED IN THIS HOPE, BUT HOPE THAT IS SEEN IS NOT HOPE; FOR WHY DOES ONE STILL  
HOPE FOR WHAT HE SEES? BUT IF WE HOPE FOR WHAT WE DO NOT SEE, WE EAGERLY WAIT FOR IT  
WITH PERSEVERANCE."** Rom 8:23-25

I would like to suggest to you that these verses from 1 John 5 are not “proof texts” about us possessing eternal life as a present possession, but rather speak of Jesus (“who alone has immortality”) possessing the believer. It is the one who is eternal life and who alone has immortality that dwells in us (“he who has the Son has the life”). Herein lies why eternal life can only be given as a promise for the future rather than a present possession. Jesus is eternal life (“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 life”).

Let me remind you of our opening text from page one in which Paul exhorted his son in the faith Timothy to:

**“...LAY HOLD ON ETERNAL LIFE, TO WHICH YOU WERE ALSO CALLED...  
...KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS, WHO ALONE HAS IMMORTALITY,  
DWELLING IN UNAPPROACHABLE LIGHT, WHOM NO MAN HAS SEEN OR CAN SEE,  
TO WHOM BE HONOR AND EVERLASTING POWER. AMEN.”** 1 Tim. 6:12-16 excerpts

It is Jesus “who alone has immortality”. As followers of Jesus, we do not yet possess immortality (“eternal life”). It is a future promise, not a present possession. If it were, we would not face death. When will the believer receive immortality? Paul is clear:

**“FOR THE TRUMPET WILL SOUND, AND THE DEAD WILL BE RAISED INCORRUPTIBLE, AND WE SHALL BE CHANGED. FOR THIS CORRUPTIBLE MUST PUT ON INCORRUPTION, AND THIS MORTAL MUST PUT ON IMMORTALITY. SO WHEN THIS CORRUPTIBLE HAS PUT ON INCORRUPTION, AND THIS MORTAL HAS PUT ON IMMORTALITY, THEN SHALL BE BROUGHT TO PASS THE SAYING THAT IS WRITTEN:  
“DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP IN VICTORY.”** 1 Cor 15:52-54

Do you remember the action God took against Adam and Eve when they sinned in the garden? First, He clothed them due to their sin, and then He moved to cut off their access to the tree of Life:

**“...ALSO FOR ADAM AND HIS WIFE THE LORD GOD MADE TUNICS OF SKIN, AND CLOTHED THEM. THEN THE LORD GOD SAID, “BEHOLD, THE MAN HAS BECOME LIKE ONE OF US, TO KNOW GOOD AND EVIL. AND NOW, LEST HE PUT OUT HIS HAND AND TAKE ALSO OF THE TREE OF LIFE, AND EAT, AND LIVE FOREVER” -- THEREFORE THE LORD GOD SENT HIM OUT OF THE GARDEN...SO HE DROVE OUT THE MAN; AND HE PLACED CHERUBIM AT THE EAST OF THE GARDEN OF EDEN, AND A FLAMING SWORD WHICH TURNED EVERY WAY, TO GUARD THE WAY TO THE TREE OF LIFE.”**

Gen 3:21-24

The pattern is clear. Even though God has “covered our sin” by means of the death of His Son Jesus, He too must keep us from access to eternal life-immortality in this present life because we are still sinful mortals living in sinful bodies capable of yielding to sin. Therefore we are given **THE PROMISE** of eternal life, not the **POSSESSION** lest we too, like Adam and Eve could “live forever” by means of direct access to eating of the Tree of Life while in a sinful state.

**GOD’S FINAL ACT OF SALVATION IS TO BRING ETERNAL LIFE TO THE BODY OF THE BELIEVER.**

This is a yet future event and therefore we find the volume of scriptures carefully stating God’s full plan.

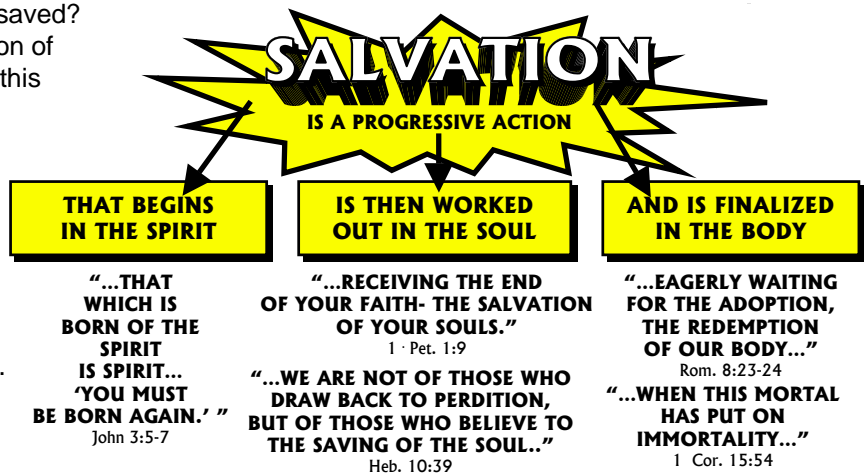
When will our mortal body be saved?

Paul tells us that the redemption of our body will take place when this “mortal puts on immortality.”

Think about that statement!

We know that “immortality” is eternal life! When will you put on eternal life (immortality)?

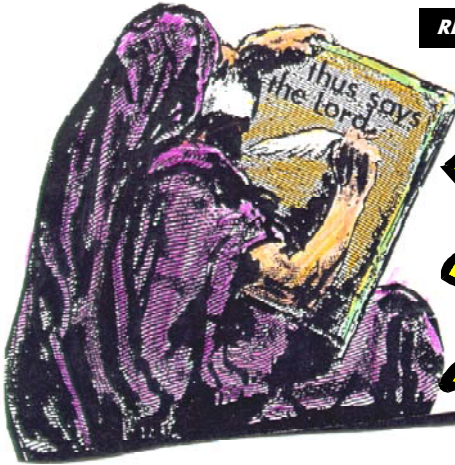
According to the apostle Paul, it will take place at the redemption of our body when this mortal puts on immortality. Then, and only then, can a believer say correctly I am totally saved, spirit, soul and body.



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# "THE PROPHETIC WORD"

*Pastor Randy Shupe*

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