

## ***‘Living in the Light’***

A teaching series in 1 John by Rev. Robert Griffith

### **Part 10: The Secret of Eternal Life**

*“See that what you have heard from the beginning remains in you. If it does, you also will remain in the Son and in the Father. And this is what he promised us - even eternal life.” (1 John 2:24-25)*

A debate is going on right now in our society concerning whether medical science ought to focus on substantially lengthening the human life-span. Of course, because of the amazing advances in medical science the average life-span is getting longer. Just in our nation our life expectancy has gone from under 50 years in 1890 through to 82.5 years in 2018. There is even speculation that with a few more breakthroughs, medical science could increase our lifespan to between 160 and 180 years in the decades to come.

Would you like to live to be 180 years old? It’s an interesting question. And the answer depends on a number of variables. For instance, what would the quality of your life be? You see, few people would like to live to be 180 years old if the quality of their life was poor. If after a certain age you were still plagued with sickness, degenerative disease, and pain, living to be very old would be a burden not a blessing. If, on the other hand, one could live longer without feeling the effects of aging, then that would be another story all together. This is why we want to find the fountain of youth. Unfortunately, it cannot be found in the plastic surgeon’s office.

Christians talk about living forever and more often than not the world has no idea what we mean. In fact, some people may think we are talking about living forever like we live now. This is why it’s important for us to understand what we mean when we talk about eternal life. Eternal life, you see, is as much about the quality of life as it is about the quantity or length of life. And when defined like that, it is the most precious and desirable commodity around.

Throughout history, people have sought to find the secret of eternal life. Sadly, much of that endeavour has been to live a good enough life in order to earn eternal life. This is our way, not God’s way. It seems right to us, but the Bible indicates that the result is death. That is because there is no way we could ever be good enough to earn eternal life. That is not the secret of eternal life.

So, what is the secret of eternal life? The apostle John gives us the answer in our text today – so it’s not a secret at all. It is the secret of an eternal life that is characterized not only by living forever but by living forever with the highest quality of life imaginable.

### **Abiding in the Word of Life**

The first key to eternal life is remembering what we know. In verse 24, John points us back to the essentials of the Gospel message. What we find here is really a command. He exhorts us to, *“See that what you have heard from the beginning remains in you.”* So what is that which they had heard from the beginning? It was the truth of the message of the Gospel concerning Jesus Christ, the Word of life. John goes on to tell us that we are to see that this message remains in us. The word translated ‘remains’ is also translated as ‘abides.’ I like the word abide a little better because it gives us a better picture of what John is trying to express.

He is trying to tell us that we must let the truth of the message of the life of Christ take root in our very being. It must dwell in us in such a way that it impacts our entire life. This is where we see the difference between an intellectual understanding of the word of truth and a personal commitment to live out that truth. Far too often, in the Western church especially, we have thought that if we only understood the truth, that was enough. After all, didn't the Bible say that we would *know* the truth and that *knowing* the truth would set us free? That is indeed what the Bible says but what the Bible *means* is far deeper than many people understand it to mean at this point.

When the Bible says that we will *know* the truth, it means far more by the word *know* than most of us understand. What is in view here is not a casual knowledge of the truth but an intimate, life-changing commitment to obey the truth and live within the reality of that truth. This is a deep, personal knowledge which impacts every area of our life. Unless we *know* the truth in this way, we will never experience the life-changing power of the truth. If you know that you are free and never live in that freedom, you are still bound.

### **Abiding in the Life of God**

Abiding in the word of life leads to a place of abiding in the life of God. Listen to what John says in the second half of verse 24. After he has told us to abide in the word of life, he says concerning the word of life abiding in us: *"If it does, you also will remain in the Son and in the Father."* If we abide in word of life we will also abide in the life of God. Here John sets forth the key to everything for the Christian. Christianity is all about a relationship with God through Jesus Christ. The power of Christianity to change a human life, and indeed to change the entire world, comes from the life of Jesus Christ. As the believer abides in Christ, Christ abides in the believer. Having the presence of Christ in your life is all about your relationship to Him.

John also wrote about this in his Gospel in chapter 15. Listen to what he records Jesus as saying.

*"Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing."*  
(John 15:4-5)

The key is to be plugged into our power source – Jesus Christ. This is what it means to remain in or abide in Christ. To the extent we remain plugged in we will experience the life giving power of God. And to the extent that we do not remain plugged in, we will not experience the life of God.

Remember what John said in our text today. He said *if it does*. There is a condition for abiding in the life of God. That condition is that we are living our lives by His word. We are living in obedience to His word. It does not come by occasionally reading your Bible, or occasionally attending Church. It does not even come by attending church every week. No, it only comes by a moment by moment, day by day commitment to live out the word of God.

Look at what Jesus said in John 14:23: *"If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him."* We can't get much clearer language than that. If we walk in the truth of the word of God, we will experience the life of God. We will have fellowship with the Son and with the Father. They will come and make their home with us. And we will be at home with them.

### **Abiding in the Eternal Life**

Abiding in the word of life brings us to a place of abiding in the life of God which is in itself abiding in the eternal life. Listen to John in verse 25: *"And this is what he promised us – even eternal life."*

What is eternal life? It is abiding in the life of God. It is having the eternal Son of God living His life in you and through you. It is being in fellowship with the Father. It is living by the Word. It is experiencing the abundance of God's peace and joy that flows out of His real presence in your life.

Of course, we also get to live forever. But we live forever in this new abundant life and we get to taste it here and now. When we come to Christ and begin to live by His Word we embark on a whole new journey and embrace a new dimension of living that will inevitably and unalterably lead us to transcend this earthly existence in what we call eternal life.

This is the greatest miracle of all. That God could take people like us - people full of sins, people living without any awareness of God and His love and grace - that He could change our eternal destiny and give us the highest quality of life imaginable is indeed the most miraculous of all miracles.

This is why Jesus came. This is why He died on the Cross. He came and died to reach out and touch us. He came to change our eternal destiny. He came to save us. And He did. And that's the secret of eternal life.

It is really important that we understand this simple truth about eternal life and if you only remember one statement from this whole message – let it be this one. Eternal life is not your life made longer; eternal life is not your life made better. Eternal life is actually Christ's life. Think about this. Who is the only One Who is eternal? Who is it that never had a beginning and has no end? The answer is Jesus Christ, Who was and is and is to come. So if we are given eternal life, we are given Christ's life. Or to put it another way, if we have eternal life, we have it in Christ – we are drawn into the eternal existence of God in Christ. Our life is not extended ... our life is absorbed into Christ's life. That's why the Bible says we are united with Christ in His death and in His resurrection to new life for eternity. The Apostle Paul said it so clearly in 1 Corinthians 6:17 when he said, “ ... *whoever is united with the Lord is one with him in spirit.*”

Jesus is the way, the truth and the life. If you have the Son, you have the life - Christ's life – and His life is eternal. Eternal life is not some gift package awaiting us in heaven. Eternal life is not a ticket to heaven which we buy with your obedience or claim with our faith. Eternal life is the life of Jesus Christ infused into us in such a way that Jesus' experience becomes our experience and Jesus is eternally within the presence of God and so too will we be in God's presence for every, because we are in Christ and Christ is in us. The Bible calls this the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, which is Christ in you, your only hope of glory.

So it doesn't matter how many hours you log in the Bible, if you don't meet the author personally – if you are not transformed into the image of the One Who inspired that book to be written, you have missed the whole point of the Bible. It doesn't matter how many Church services you attend or ministries you sign up for in your life ... if you don't meet the crucified, risen and reigning Christ in the mist of those services and ministries, you are also missing the whole point of being there.

What is the secret of eternal life? The answer is Jesus Christ. When you accept the free gift of salvation offered to you in Christ, you accept the life of Christ within you through the indwelling of His Holy Spirit. That, my friends, is why they call this 'the good news' – you get to exchange your broken, sinful life for the perfect, eternal life of Christ; you get to dodge the death you deserved while Jesus goes to the cross in your place and you are then resurrected with Christ, once and for all time, and in Him you will live forever. That is why we sing, “*Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me, I once was lost, but now I'm found; was blind, but now I see.*”