

Features of eternal life; nine tests as to whether we have it

Part 1

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[00:00:01] John 20, verse 30, and many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book, but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name.

And over in John's first epistle, John's first epistle, chapter 5, John's first epistle and chapter 5, [00:01:04] and we'll read verse 11 now, 11 to 13, and this is the record that God has given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.

He that has the Son has life, and he that has not the Son of God has not life.

These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God. And just while we're in this chapter, I'll read again a phrase from verse 20, from verse 20, His Son, Jesus Christ, this is the true God and eternal life.

[00:02:05] And over in chapter 1, John's first epistle, John chapter 1 and verse 1, 1 John 1 and verse 1.

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, are the world of life. For the life was manifested and we have seen it, and bear witness and show unto you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested unto us. That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you that ye also may have fellowship with us, and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ.

And these things write we unto you that your joy may be full.

[00:03:05] And in chapter 3, 1 John chapter 3 and verse 14.

We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love another.

And verse 16, Hereby receive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

But whosoever has this world's good and sees his brother have need, and shouts up his vows of compassion from him, how dwells the love of God in him.

My little children, because it's not a loving word, neither a tongue, but in deed and in truth.

[00:04:06] And hereby we know that we are of the truth.

I really just want, dear brethren, I've read a lot of these verses just to get a sort of background, a setting, and I really want to concentrate on the verses we read in 1 John chapter 1, 1 to 4.

And I'm sure most of you know that John, as he said there, he wrote his gospel, the gospel was written, that he might have life. It's a gospel.

Although Mark says, he calls it a gospel, he's the only one of the writers that says it's a gospel, Mark. These gospels, Matthew, Mark and Luke, were not written really to convert people. Thankfully they do convert people.

Heaven will be filled with many people who have been saved through preaching from Luke's gospel and Mark's gospel and Matthew's gospel. [00:05:08] But John is the only one that says he wrote a gospel that souls might be saved. So, you see, the point was, he wrote the gospel that you might have life. And of course, quite clearly, as we did this afternoon, we who have life, the Lord Jesus Christ, we get a lot of encouragement, don't we, from John's gospel. John Knox, I know I'll be allowed to mention him here.

Brother John Knox.

Yes, he was drawn near the end of his life, wasn't he? John Knox, drawn near the end of his life.

And his dear wife was with him.

And although she was a lot younger than him, they were still on the same wavelength. And she said, what will I read to you, John? What will I read to you, John? And he was just about it. [00:06:01] She says, he said, I've always hung myself in John's gospel. So she wrote him John 17.

And that's what it was, hung on John's gospel.

And we always think of him as the great Calvinist, don't we? Oh, he's nearly as bad as Calvin. But there he was, hung in John's gospel.

Hung in John's gospel.

So there it was, you see, the gospel. Blessed gospel it is.

And that's what it was written for.

And then, you see, John wasn't finished. John wasn't finished.

He wrote Revelation.

He then wrote the gospel. And his last thing was the epistles. Last thing written, epistles.

And the Lord said at the end of John, didn't he? He said to Peter, what is that to you?

If he tarry, till I come.

[00:07:04] And Paul and John and James endured wonderful writings. But, you know, you find increasingly in days of darkness that we turn to John's writings, don't we? They are right through John's writings. And John says specifically why he wrote that epistle.

It obviously was the case that people had eternal life, but they didn't know they had it.

They weren't really in the enjoyment of it. And that's why he said, these things have I written to you that you may know that you have eternal life. To believe on the name of the Son of God in all the full power and authority. All the glory, the grandeur, the splendor, the majesty that comes out in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. All that's conveyed in that wonderful name. Oh, how blessed it is, all that's come out, it's all out. [00:08:01] Get into it, get into it.

And dig more and more.

I was reminded earlier, wasn't I? About a month ago, they were back there. Somebody went back to retrace the Nile.

And wasn't it Speak?

Good Newcastle man, him. Speak, man from Newcastle. Anyway, he traced the Nile back and he came and he found it. He said it started in Victoria, Lake Victoria. And it started from the mouth of the Nile with its great big delta.

Went out into the Mediterranean, great delta. When he got to Lake Victoria, he said, there's more at the source than there is at the mouth. And dear saints of God, get into these things, get into them. And you'll find the prospects opening to the Christian view are brighter as the days go by. There's a wealth, there's depth unfathomed there, you know. There's depth there. Get into them, dear saint of God. So he says, I've written that that you might know that you have eternal life. [00:09:04] Oh, that's it.

You see, he was insistent that we might know it. That we might really enjoy it to the full. And so he says, he begins, that which was from the beginning, that which was from the beginning.

There are many beginnings in the Gospels, in the Bible. Many beginnings.

In the beginning was the Word. And that goes right back. In the beginning God created, but this goes beyond the creation. In the beginning was the Word.

It's there in the beginning. And he was there from the beginning. And we use the word beginning because we are creatures of time. And we have to think of something which had a beginning. But really by definition, eternity had no beginning.

It was there, ever there. Father and Son, Father and Son.

Holy Spirit, the Council Chamber of Eternity. [00:10:01] In that blessed place.

Oh, the persons of the Godhead. Eternal persons of the Godhead. Father and Son, Father and Son. If we try and limit these relationships to time, we take away the reality of Godhead. We take away the reality of all that's in the Godhead. If we lessen it to say that these only came out in time. We lose everything.

We lose the whole of Christianity. We lose the whole of Christianity. When I was brought up to be an atheist. And that's what my father taught me. He said, look, if that son is temporal, then I can tolerate Christianity.

But when they tell me he's eternal, then I must attack Christianity.

That's the faith I was brought up in. That's the faith I was brought up in. To realize that Christianity stood and fell upon the eternal relationship of persons in the Godhead. [00:11:02] That's how vital and fundamental it is. We know that, don't we?

In that blessed place.

And so it says here, that which.

I know we shouldn't really say that of a person. That which, when he's bringing out what eternal life is. When it's involved in a person.

That which, he who was from the beginning.

He who was ever there, ever there. There was never any time, never any point when he wasn't there. That which was from the beginning. Was there.

And it came out, he says, John said, we have heard. We've heard.

John saw him. We beheld his glory. The glory as of an only begotten with a father. A unique glory.

Never been any other glory like that. Unique glory to him.

Children have a glory of their parents. Some indeed might have even more glory than their parents. [00:12:03] But the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ was unique to him. A unique glory.

Glory as of an only begotten of a father. And it says, he heard him.

We have heard him, didn't he? In fact, John was called right there and then.

When he was by, mending his nets.

And he was called and he heard him. And he heard him all through the time there. The three years or three months or so when our blessed Lord was here in public testimony. He heard him.

And then he actually saw him, didn't he? His eyes took him in. He saw him.

Yes, he could see him going on. Moving through the scene for the pleasure of God the Father. Perhaps he couldn't see him on the mountain when he spent all night in prayer. Maybe he didn't see that. Maybe many, many other things that he didn't see. Of course, he wouldn't also be aware of the sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ. [00:13:01] Remember the meal offering. There was sufferings on the griddle. The griddle open.

There was the sufferings in the pan like the porridge. And there was that which was in the oven. Unseen. Unseen. Unseen.

The sufferings of our blessed Lord as a man here for the pleasure of God. Feelings that he could feel only. He certainly was a man.

He wept, you might say, almost with humanity at the grave of Lazarus. But deeper than that, dear Saint of God, he wept because as God he was weeping to see the effect that sin and death had on the creature that he had created. And that alone could be from God. The heart of God.

And John would behold that. Unseen. Unseen.

We've seen him.

Looked upon it. Looked upon it. You know, he might just see things. But it is to look upon it, isn't it? To look upon him.

[00:14:02] How does Mr. Darby render that?

He says, seen with our eyes.

And then he says, contemplated. A contemplation to just take him in.

Gaze upon him and take all that's in him. Make him really understandable.

You see?

You might see people going about. But how precious it is to get to know them. We often say, don't we, that we know people in the meeting and this sort of thing. I quote it many times.

He was visible, wasn't he?

Sorry, he was audible.

You heard him. He was audible. He was visible. He was understandable. And he was tangible.

Blessed Lord Jesus.

There he was.

This was eternal life, was he here? And it says here, of the word of life. Word of life. And of course, the word is what he is in his essence. [00:15:02] The whole declaration of God and of life came out in him. Word is the expression.

They say, how could he be eternal word? There was nothing for him to speak to in a part of eternity. He was potentially there. The voice, the word of God to be given. And the whole vast universe that had called in. We know about him.

The word of life, the supremacy. Wonderful glory that there is. The whole mind of God declared and known. Potentially there in him. In that past age we tend. Ever there.

Ready to be declared and brought out fully. The word.

The word.

Of the word of life. And then it says, the life has been manifested.

Yes, clearly. You see, when they saw that person, it was the life that was being manifested. It was him.

The glorious person. All that pulsed in him was this eternal life. And it was seen.

It was manifested.

It was declared. It was seen. Bear witness. And he bears witness to them. And he reports to you that eternal life.

[00:16:04] Those he's writing to. And we know it, of course, it comes down through the ages to us. In this year, year 2006. Comes down to us.

That John has reported to us. The eternal life. The eternal life.

No other life like this.

Supreme.

The eternal life.

And that life was with the father.

That life was with the father. Father and son. That life.

That blessed person there in that past heavenly eternity. That was eternal life.

The son.

The son.

The word here. The son with the father. That which was with the father.

And that was manifested to them here.

They saw him as he walked about the scene. He says now. Now. That which we have seen and heard. Seen and heard. He stresses that. Already he had said in verse 1, wasn't it, that we heard. [00:17:01] And then saw.

Now he's coming from the other point. You see, that's what came to him first of all. He heard first the call. And then he saw. He heard the call and then he saw. Now having got into that position in company with the Lord. He can then come out to us and say we saw him. And we heard about the blessed truths he brought. And we report to you.

We give you a report of what we saw and what we heard. The order is reversed. Notice that in verse 3.

It's hearing and it's seeing and hearing there. And he does that.

That ye also may have fellowship with us.

Fellowship in the sense of communion. Fellowship in that intimate sense of communion. One with the other. You see how blessed and wonderful it is to have that communion. With the apostle John and, of course, clearly all the apostle writers.

You may have fellowship with us. And he says our fellowship is indeed with the father and with his son Jesus Christ.

[00:18:05] That's the fellowship of the apostles there. And we are brought into that. We are brought in to have fellowship with him. And they have fellowship. They had fellowship with the father and with his son. And through them it has come down to us. And we have this blessed fellowship of the father and the son. We brought into that blessed reality fellowship with one another. And the fellowship is with the father and with his son Jesus Christ.

And that's what it consists in. That's what eternal life consists in. We've got it in us.

And that's how we enjoy it. In that wonderful sphere, that blessed place. In this way. The father and the son brought into this place of divine, blessed communications. What a wonderful, blessed place to be in the ascent of God. There's nothing here that was referred to this afternoon. The believer is an exotic. He's in an out-of-the-world condition of things here. [00:19:01] By the great work of redemption. It's wonderful the work of redemption. We've got our sins forgiven. We are at peace with God. And we've assured and set hope for him. Wonderful indeed. As a result of redemption, we are brought into a new life. A new sphere of things.

Redemption brings us in to that new and wonderful life. An out-of-the-world condition of things. Completely out-of-the-world condition of things. Now you say, oh well, that's great stuff. But we've got to be, you know, we've got our feet here on this earth. Well, they used to say to me, you know, when I was exercised about identifying myself with a couple of saints whom, by God's grace, I've been identified for about 60, you know, 50 or so years. When I was telling my other believing friends, you

know, that I was going to go among, in converted commas, the brethren, so-called. Oh, don't go there. Don't go there.

You'll become too heavenly to be of any earthly use. [00:20:02] And I soon found that it's only as you are heavenly that you're of any earthly use. Do you see that, brother? I'm sure you agree with that, isn't it? I mean, we can't, if we take the things of this world and we will never help this world. It's because we're in touch with a blessed man on the border with a heavenly scene we can bring. We're in touch there and we've got the resources there that can be brought down. Because what this world needs is Jesus. Just the glimpse of him. That's what this world needs, doesn't it? There was a young man, known to many of you here. Well, he's not young now, but when he was a younger man, in his twenties or so, and they had in his film Management by Objectives. I don't know if it still goes. I think it was dying out when I was giving up work. Management by Objectives is one of the things every year, you see, your boss has got you in and you had an assessment. An assessment, this great big company, you see. Everybody from the chairman right down is reassessed, you see.

And this man's boss said to this believer, Mr. X, [00:21:02] you're too unworldly to get on in business. And Mr. X said, well, I'm afraid I like to do my job, I'll do my job fully for you, but I'm not desirous of getting on in this world. I'm living, as you well know, for the next world and seeking that others might come and enjoy that other world.

So, you see, we're set here for the glory of God. And now, just one little matter, the thing that really, where I feel this teaching touches with what our dear brother brought before us, was really that verse that he read in Philippians chapter 2 that touched me and got me to my feet tonight, because I feel that that's where John and Paul touch is in a practical matter like Philippians chapter 2 where it said I have no man like minded, like St. Timothy, [00:22:02] who will naturally care for your state, but all seek their own things, not the things which are of Jesus Christ. You see, that's Paul's language. John's language is what we've read in chapter 3. You see, in this John's epistle, at your leisure, you can go through and see there are nine tests as to whether you've got eternal life. Nine tests. You don't need to examine yourself. You know you've got it. But anybody who claims to have it, you test them with these nine points. And one of the great points is here in verse 14 of chapter 3. We know that we have passed from death to life because we love the brethren.

We love the brethren. That's the test, isn't it? That's one of their nine tests. That's how we know that we've passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. Not many Christians would naturally love me, but because they've passed from death to life [00:23:02] they love me. And so that's the situation that often we might look around and naturally we would not have any affinity with some of these things. But it's because we've passed from death to life that we love the brethren. And Ruth said that, didn't she? Thy people shall be my people. Where thou diest, I will die. And there will I be buried. What's his name?

Not Uriah, the man in David, 2 Samuel.

There, the Israelite.

Israelite, isn't he? He said whatsoever place my Lord shall be, whether in death or life, there will thy servant be. And we've got to be there with the saints of God. He says that he loved the brethren. And in verse 16, one of the John 3 and 16's, hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us. Where strictness being it wasn't God the Father, it was God the Son that laid down his

life for us. And here it's [00:24:02] an ought. We ought.

It's not an obligation. It's not a an option. We have the option of laying down our life. It doesn't say that, does it? Hmm? It says we ought.

We ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. We've got no option in the matter.

Well, you say, oh, why would I be able to do that? You know, once the way the governments are going and pressure gets put on us and, you know, they'll be putting us in prison for believing Christianity.

You know, I mean, think of that dear saint, that couple. The local authority in Lancashire was publicising homosexuality as being a normal way of life and they put oh, a lot of display in it. This dear couple replied to the council and said can we put some Christian literature beside it? And do you know that? That very afternoon, the police were along, telling them that, oh, well, you know, we could [00:25:02] charge you and get you in prison for that. That's a heinous crime.

A heinous crime to want to put Christian literature beside things like that. Eighty minutes the police spent with them, telling them how terrible the people were, what absolute criminals they were. And it was just by their, you know, just by their favour that they weren't going to be put in prison. This is the land that we're getting into, dear saints of God. This is the land we're getting into.

And so we might be called, you know, this is the days getting darker. The days are getting darker. But in the meantime, the apostle says here, how if we see this world's goodness, if we've got this world's good and see his brother having need and shuts up his bowels from him, how dwells the love of God in him? We may not be called upon to lay down life, but we've still got, you know, these pockets here.

I challenge myself much more than you. I have to daily say, Lord, you know, this that thou hast given me, [00:26:02] you have given it to me, Lord. It's not mine, it's yours. And that's how we must, we're stewards of what he has given to us. It's not ours, you know, it's his. And we've got to be stewards for him. And he said giving bowels of compassion, the authorised version puts compassion in brackets, but it really should be there. It is bowels of compassion. Very seldom used, you know, compassion is only used once out of the believer. Compassion is only always used of God and the Lord Jesus, who is God. Compassion. But this is one of the only twice that's used of us, compassion.

It's God-likeness, isn't it? It's a feature of God coming out in us, compassion on the saints of God. And it says, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and truth.

In deed and truth.

And that's where I feel that this coalesces with what our dear brother said. [00:27:02] They're seeking their own things. They love not the things that we, Jesus Christ, are not concerned how they are, but Timothy was one that was.

He cared and concerned how they were getting on. And here's the things coalescing. Let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth. That's it. It's the action.

The apostle Paul could say, I would like to know not the power in speech, the speech of them, but the power, what they're actually doing. And that's how it is, you see. It's our steps, are we doing that, which is really practical. And there is need around today, there's no doubt about it, dear saints of God. There's need.

It shamed me when I was preaching the gospel a fortnight ago, preaching the gospel in open air, and a dear brother beside me, and his shoes, there was a great big hole in his shoes.

How can I stand and preach the gospel? [00:28:02] You've got to meet that need, dear saints of God, haven't you? Men passing by, of course, then they listen. They know the reality of it. And it comes with living power to them. It speaks to them.

Anyway, dear saints of God, I won't go on too much, but I think you get the drift of what I mean. We've got eternal life, it's a wonderful blessing, supreme blessing. And it comes out, it comes out in a practical way as we walk in the scene for the glory of God, and it's only as we are enjoying it, as we are in touch with that blessed heavenly scene, that we are of any power to be here for Christ. May it be so, for his name's sake. Amen. Father, explain the source of blessings, the graceful praise to be in the rain, object sung by song, object sung in the state of ecstasy, sung by love, brought to rest within the circle of previous harvest leaves. May we remain for the living all this. [00:29:02] May we rejoice at another thing all the time.