

Eternal Life

Part 1

Speaker	Michael Johnson
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[00:00:00] 1 John 1, verse 1 1 John 1, verse 1 1 John 1, verse 1 [00:01:30] 1 John 1, verse 1 [00:02:01] 1 John 1, verse 1 1 John 1, verse 1 1 John 1, verse 1 1 John 1, verse 1 1 John 1, verse 1 1 John 1, verse 1 1 John 1, verse 1 Chapter 5 of John's first epistle, verse 20 And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son, Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.

Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.

[00:03:02] And lastly, just three verses in John 14, John's Gospel, chapter 14 John chapter 14, verse 1 John chapter 14, verse 1 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 unto Myself, that where I am, there ye may be also.

[00:04:03] In reading to you, mainly from the epistle of John tonight, I want to speak very simply and directly about eternal life.

I was interested to listen to Mr. Thurston this afternoon. We were able to listen to what he said from Matthew 16 onward about Peter's confession of the Lord.

I think it must be true of everyone who speaks, who endeavours to serve the Lord in ministering the Word, that you humbly seek the Lord's direction in what you say. It's not difficult to say something, is it? But to say the kind of things which will touch and stir the hearts of the saints and challenge the consciences, you really need to be directed of God. In listening to what he said and identifying with him [00:05:05] over the matter of the meeting for prayer, when prayer meetings somewhere are being given up, sometimes the lower level of the times that we gather to the Lord to remember His name, and often we have to say with a good deal of humiliation and confession, barrenness in open ministry of the Word. And I really have no shadow of doubt that if the thing that the Lord has laid on my heart really grips us as individuals, then when we gather to the Lord's name, prayer meetings won't be marked by the kind of things that Mr Thurston enumerated.

They'll be marked by real power and real, earnest, God-given prayer.

The breaking of bread will be marked by sweetness, and dare I say, tears.

The ministry of the Word will be the kind of thing [00:06:01] we all must have listened to, and had our hearts challenged by God in days gone by. And I was encouraged when I was listening to him to think that at least what I had to say was complementary to the ministry that he undertook. I want to speak very simply then about eternal life in the sun, a long gaze at the Son of God to see the thing in all its perfectness.

Later in the first epistle of John, eternal life in the saints, in the fifth chapter of the epistle, to face our hearts with a challenge about the days in which we live, and the kind of things that can rub us of the enjoyment and the power of eternal life, and right at the end, a glimpse of the place where eternal life is at home.

[00:07:04] We don't have to try to conjure up why John's epistle was written.

We're told very plainly, we read the words in chapter 1, These things I write unto you, that your joy may be full.

In a Bible reading some five months ago, a young brother said, Why is it, if we really have the truth of God, are we not marked by evident joy in the Lord? A fair question in the light of the words, These things I write unto you, that your joy may be full. In chapter 2 we read the words, These things we write unto you, that ye sin not.

And what man of us, what woman of us, would not earnestly long to God to live the kind of life [00:08:01] which is dominant over things within and things without? And then later in the epistle, chapter 5 isn't it, where it says, These things we write unto you, that believe in the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life. And I fancy not a few in our company at times will lack the assurance of eternal life.

There's no reason to think about what it was John wrote his epistle for. They're given very plainly, the reasons for writing his epistle. And if I were able to say the kind of things that I feel, the things that have been laid on my heart by the Lord for, it's certainly that we might have a deeper appreciation of the Lord and that our hearts might be marked by the spirit of worship and that we might really live again to the nature of the favour [00:09:01] that God has bestowed upon us and that we might face very squarely and fairly the kind of idols that are robbing us individually of power for God in this world and robbing us of the enjoyment of that which is our normal part.

Eternal life in the Son.

We read the words in the first chapter of the epistle, the word of life at the end of verse one, our hands have handled of the word of life.

When the word is spoken of in scripture it's one of the many ways which God uses to outline the unique glory of his Son.

In John's gospel, chapter one, we start with the words, [00:10:01] in the beginning was the word and since in verse fourteen it tells us that the word became flesh before ever there was any opportunity or in following out the purpose of God the fact that in this world God would not be made known partially

as he was made known to the patriarchs, as he was made known to Moses as the covenant keeping Jehovah before ever those times became the Son of God was the word saying very simply that he was in himself sufficiently great to make God known not partially but to fully make him known that not one thing should be lacking.

And the background against which the epistle was written was simply this, in the first century there came along men who said [00:11:02] yes, what was communicated by the Son of God to the apostolic company was good for unlearned fishermen but we need a development on it and by the Spirit of God John pens his epistle and makes it perfectly plain there can be no development upon it our safety lies in that which was from the beginning because that which came out in the Son of God was absolutely perfect nothing could be added to it there's no development upon it because when he was here God's last and final word to men was spoken God at last was fully made known and that's what John says he says that life was manifested and we declare and show unto you that eternal life which was with the Father [00:12:03] and was manifested unto us now I'm not going to where I'm able to distinguish clearly between new birth and eternal life but when I read the words in verse 2 that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested unto us I cannot escape the fact that until he stepped into this world eternal life was never seen I think that can be adequately backed up by what is said in John chapter 3 before ever we could have it John chapter 3 verse 15 as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness even so must the Son of Man be lifted up that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have eternal life the Lord had to die before any one of us could receive eternal life [00:13:02] and I can't escape that when John pens these words that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested unto us until the Son of God stepped down into this world eternal life was never seen I've often thought to myself that when John penned his epistle had he been subject to his own impulse and had he written of the glory of the Lord Jesus that most stood out he would have been hard pressed to have decided which one he should speak about whilst we speak of John's gospel as the gold and as the sun there are no more touching incidents to any heart of his true humanity when he wept by the side of Lazarus' grave [00:14:02] when he groaned within his spirit when he saw the appalling power of death when you think of the word of the King with whom there's power there are no end of his glories blended in the gospel of John but when John enumerates that one glory which above all glories stood out for him he said the glory was of an only begotten with a Father full of grace and truth wasn't just that God was being made known now in the power that ever belonged to him certainly it was there and ably demonstrated when the Lord was here it was not just now that he was the covenant keeping Jehovah whose word given will never be withdrawn but what John focused upon was that glory of relationship and he spoke of that glory [00:15:03] and he said the glory of an only begotten with a Father full of grace and truth and we read the words that eternal life which was with the Father the words of scripture may be very few about many things we had a brother in Denmark Street who periodically would take up untrodden paths of scripture and I more than once remember him saying the words of scripture may be few but how mighty and the words of scripture about the Lord in eternity past are very few but how wonderfully full and touching recently somebody said to me that he'd been reading one of the newer Bibles and that it seemed that nearly every one of our proof texts for the Lord's deity you could very easily do without [00:16:04] and I said to him you know I came to the conclusion some while ago that if the textual critics were to take out all the plain proof texts we'd have no difficulty in proving that he's still overall God blessed forevermore and I referred to one you read one this afternoon a brother in Tyneside some couple of years back repeated a verse that you read this afternoon with emphasis as a proof of the Lord's deity where the Lord says to that marvellous confession of Peter Thou art Peter and on this rock I will build my assembly and he said these words at that time he said Blessed art thou Simon Bar-Jonah for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee but my Father which is in heaven and I also say unto thee

[00:17:01] an undeniable proof of his deity and there's another in John 3 and that's why I referred to this the Lord said words that no other man could say he said we speak that we do know and testify that we have seen now a man like David might be able to say as he says in the 23rd chapter of 2 Samuel the Spirit of the Lord spake by me and his word was in my tongue but David could never say we speak that we do know and testify that we have seen because when the Son of God spoke of the time before he came when he spoke of heaven it wasn't a report by the Spirit of God it was that which he had seen it was that which he had witnessed it was the very heaven which he had given character to and John says of him that eternal life [00:18:02] which was with the Father and was manifested unto us now it's beyond my ability and beyond my time to be able to fill out those words but just a couple of glimpses of it think of this world where to a greater or a lesser degree every man has done his own will and at the point of entry into this world Hebrews 10 again which marks out the Lord as being absolutely unique he says when he cometh into the world he says I come to do thy will O God being but a youth he said wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business we have four children that we pray for day by day we've witnessed how easily and how early in the life of a child [00:19:02] self-will can be dominant but there was one who was in this world being but a youth who was dominated by the will of God there was one who all the way through his life went in the path of obedience when Mr. Thurston was quoting this afternoon those striking challenging stirring words from the 15th chapter of 1st Samuel to obey is better than to sacrifice and to hearken than the fat of rams I thought of the words which came later in the new translation rendering of them where our authorize says stubbornness is as idolatry and iniquity the new translation reads self-will self-will not obedience self-will is as iniquity and idolatry [00:20:01] and to the extent that on one occasion right at the end of his path not in the circumstances of the Garden of Eden where everything was favorable but where everything was against him he said these words oh my father if it be possible let this cup pass from me nevertheless not my will but thy will be done little wonder that John said that eternal life which was with the father and was manifested unto us it will take eternity brethren to fill out the meaning of those words but in all its unique divine fullness eternal life was seen when the son of God stepped into this world I'm persuaded it never had been seen before and in all its uniqueness it's never been since the son of God [00:21:01] was cast out of this world by the way of the cross but that is what the scripture says about eternal life one who wholly lived in doing the will of God now when you think of that it seems a little beyond scriptures isn't it? to talk about eternal life in the believer particularly when you read the words as we read them in verse 5 this then is the message which we have heard of him and declare unto you that God is light and in him is no darkness at all I know we can very easily pass things off outwardly but not a man of us honestly inwardly would be prepared to let everybody see everything that passes through I read a remark which made that stick with me in a book by James Boyd some while ago [00:22:01] I think it was a comment on the the verse in the second chapter of first Corinthians God has given to us his spirit but he said something like this these are not his words but it's the drift of his words he said I wouldn't you know if I gave you my body you would know something of the ills that my body is subject to if I were able to give you my soul you would know something of the emotion that often wells up in my heart as a believer as a father as a husband but if I gave you my spirit there wouldn't be one thing about me that was hidden from you I wouldn't dare give you my spirit but God has given to us his spirit and I think what James Boyd said every one of us to some degree [00:23:01] if we are honest we would re-echo and how would it stand in the light of a verse that the message that John declared was this that God was light and in him is no darkness at all had we not those precious words in verse 7 not one of us would stand in the light of them but we read the words in verse 7 and the blood of Jesus Christ God's son cleanseth from every sin before ever there can be eternal life in any believer it necessitated the death of the son of God I read the other evening the remarks of one of those brothers last century so gifted by God in ministry of the word and he was but a few days from going home and he said to somebody during my life

[00:24:01] and humble service for God I've endeavored to set in front of people the plain teachings of scripture to speak honestly about the teachings of Paul about the church as the body of Christ and as the house of God and as the city of God and the bride of Christ I've sought to speak to them plainly about that abiding life and nature of the family circle that John speaks about but he said as I come to the end of my days I find no sweeter words than these the blood of Jesus Christ God's son cleanses from every pillow every sin as a pillow to lay my head upon and except those words had been penned the blood of Jesus Christ God's son cleanses [00:25:01] from every sin I don't think any one of us in the face of the words this then is the message that we declare unto you that God is light and in him is no darkness at all would have thought it ever possible that that which was seen so perfectly and uniquely the son of God in this world should be seen in its measure in the sense of God but it isn't only that because that was preceded by the words in verse 7 but if we walk in the light as he is in the light we have fellowship one with another and the blood of Jesus Christ God's son cleanses from every sin because it's not saying now that God is light and no darkness at all it says that God is in the light God is perfectly revealed God is in the light [00:26:01] of revelation and every believer whether you trusted the Lord yesterday whether you are mature on the road every believer is in the light I wasn't brought up in a Christian home and therefore when I first trusted the Lord I didn't even know where John 3.16 was and I had a lot of things to unlearn and a lot of things that were hard to learn and one beloved brother who Sidney Thurston spoke of this afternoon we had the unique opportunity of listening to his teaching at his feet for a period of about 6 years and I never could get hold of until a couple of years ago something that he said that verse 7 is not how we walk it's where we walk and it suddenly dawned on me with all its solemnness one day [00:27:01] that we're in the light we're always in the light even if we sin we sin in the light and if you're a believer at all you're not only constantly in the abiding value of the precious blood of the Son of God but you're in the light when the Lord left this world something was true which was never true before that God was perfectly made known He was in the light not one word would have been different not one act would have been different had God the Father Son and Holy Spirit being down here together when the Lord said to Philip he that has seen me hath seen the Father then these words took on their meaning as he is in the light God is made perfectly known [00:28:02] we're not only in the abiding value of the precious blood of Christ if we're believers at all we're in the light and it's then that the word comes in in verse 3 that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you that ye may have fellowship with us and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ someone recently gave me a booklet about the charismatic movement and about the emergence of apostles in the charismatic movement and I read it and as I read it I couldn't help comparing what was being said and strange enough they quoted from the very verse that came into my mind as I read the early part of this comment they spoke about the presence of apostles today well Ephesians chapter 2 [00:29:02] speaks about apostles and it says that what they laid was the foundation and there was a quotation it said being built upon the apostles and prophets it's not quite what the scripture says but that's what the quotation says the scripture says being built upon the foundation of the apostles and the prophets and the foundation that the apostles and prophets laid which abides today essentially centers in the person of God's dear Son our Lord Jesus Christ and the thing which was at the center of the fellowship of the apostles and prophets was this and they are the us that John speaks of that you might have fellowship with us and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ [00:30:01] is that fellowship which characterizes Christianity that sharing together that eternal life of which John speaks when he says that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested unto us if you sum then very simply what John has said in the course of his epistle and it's in the light of this that we're able to speak with perfect assurance if not knowing very much about it that that which was so perfectly seen in all its uniqueness in the Son Himself eternal life is seen in its measure of those by grace who are in the abiding value of that precious blood who are in the light and there they walk and to enjoy that

fellowship which was common to the apostles in their day truly our fellowship [00:31:01] is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ and I think it's on that foundation which is simply a summing of what John has said in this first epistle that we're able to say with happy assurance that that which was seen so wonderfully in the Son Himself in measure is seen in the saints today I read to you in the commencement of the second chapter the matter of the maintenance of it John gives there in that first verse the second reason for writing his epistle these things we write unto you that ye sin not I may not know very much about that but I have no shadow of doubt that that is normal Christianity not to be dominated by what is within us not to be attracted and dominated [00:32:01] by what is outside of us but to be found moving through this world sinning not I don't think any one of us can evade that's what he's saying these things we write unto you that ye sin not normal Christianity is to move through this world for God not being dominated by sin but he goes on to say if any man sin we have an advocate with the Father Jesus Christ the righteous one I suppose all of us must have the experience that tends to convince us how full the word of God is things that you never see suddenly your eyes are open to them and you begin to marvel at the wonderful fullness that lies in the word of God it's only two or three years ago in a bible reading on Tyneside that when we were reading John 14 [00:33:01] and considering the Lord's words I will pray the Father and he will give you another comforter that it suddenly dawned on me that the Lord was saying as plain as a pike staff to the disciples that he would not cease to be going as man on high all that he'd ever been to them he would still be absolutely taken up with them living for them interceding for them guiding them caring them teaching them warning them but that was the added benefit of another comforter the Holy Spirit of God within us that's what John's speaking of here we ought not to sin sadly we do all sin but there's a provision made of God that that enjoyment of and response to eternal life might be maintained in us if any man sin [00:34:01] we have an advocate with the Father Jesus Christ the Righteous One I think I once remember reading someone's comment on the word advocate which is exactly the same word as is used for comforter speaking of the Holy Spirit in John 14, 15 and 16 that were it not too common a word our English word solicitor would ably answer to what is meant one who undertakes someone's affairs and completely manages them and there's this provision made of God we ought not to sin normal Christianity is to move through this world not being dominated by sin but God has made that provision that we might be maintained if any man sin we have an advocate with the Father Jesus Christ the Righteous One and He is the propitiation [00:35:02] for our sins one comment in that connection in verse 9 if we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness I heard this not long after I had turned to the Lord it certainly stood me in good stead and therefore I'm able to say it with equal commitment as the brother who first said it to me he said keep short accounts with God if there's something that soils your spirit that breaks communion make sure that it's quickly dealt with keep short accounts with God if we confess our sins He is able and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness must be some years ago when I heard our brother Daniel Patterson [00:36:02] one day say about this the confession of sins here is not at the bar of the judge it's at the altar of the priest but thinking over it some while ago I thought perhaps in John's setting you could even say it's at the knee of a father I know that domestic discipline is a thing which is largely dying out in this world and just to what degree it's true sometimes of our own family circles the Lord alone knows but it's certainly a necessary underlying girding of scripture as far as the home is concerned and perhaps if something more of confessing at the knee of a father in a family circle were known perhaps we'd know a little more of the meaning if we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins I read to you the words [00:37:03] in 1 John 5 for two reasons not that I'm able to say very much about it but I only noticed it recently and I doubt others can fill it out In verse 20 it says And we know the Son of God is come and has given us an understanding that we should know him that is true and we are in him that is true this is the true God and eternal life and it occurred to me that perhaps these issues

which are raised in verse 20 question of knowledge we know that the Son of God is come the question of understanding entering into that knowledge the matter of being positional positionally placed before God we are in him that is true perhaps those are the some of the ingredients of eternal life but against that background and I read it mainly for this verse [00:38:02] in verse 21 it says Little children keep yourselves from idols it's rather a shame that our authorized version has not distinguished very clearly between little children and children I don't know very much about the language but I know at least that the language in which the New Testament was written is a good deal more rich in words to describe various stages of children than English is in fact a brother was pointing one out to us at our reading on Thursday when Paul said to Timothy and that from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures it's the word which very often is used of an unborn child it certainly is used of a newborn child and he made a comment he said being in a Jewish home perhaps the earliest thing that Timothy saw before ever he knew what they meant were the sacred letters [00:39:01] he would see them above the door he'd see them on a scroll on the door post from a child thou hast known the sacred letters but when in 1 John 5.21 it says little children keep yourselves from idols it's not speaking of various stages of growth as it does in the second chapter babes, young men, fathers it's speaking of the children that which describes every child of God little children keep yourselves from idols now I'm not going to enumerate idols but that which comes in between us and the happy enjoyment of that family circle fellowship with the father and the son is an idol and if we're to borrow from the second chapter just for a moment 1 John 2 when John writes to the young men he says to the young men love not the world [00:40:02] neither the things which are in the world for all that is in the world the lust of the eyes the lust of the flesh the pride of life is not of the father if any man loved the world the love of the father is not in him and I really feel we live in days when there is a need for plain speaking the lust of the eyes it's right isn't it the world is dominated by what it sees I said to a colleague the other day when somebody was ordering something we got no money left I said it's a very good example of what the proverb says the eye is not satisfied with seeing and children of God as we are with such a calling and given the uniqueness of eternal life there's a danger of idols being dominated by what the eye sees I may be speaking tonight to a young person looking for a partner for life [00:41:02] not a believer it's an idol it may not only lead you to undermining happiness in life it certainly will damn back the gracious work of the spirit of God and the happy enjoyment of eternal life the lust of the eyes the lust of the flesh the pride of life I always feel this for young men I'm not old myself I've had ambitions I've seen people in this world who've been utterly dominated by ambitions I was speaking to an American coming down in the train when it was stopped today and he was talking about his father he said he's like all American vice presidents he's had his heart attack he's had his ulcer and he said he said to me the other day I wish my sense of values were different I've heard it from my colleagues [00:42:01] is there a young man tonight here a young woman whose sights are firmly set on this world in the light of John's word the lust of the eyes the lust of the flesh and the pride of life worldly ambition is clearly out and John writes right at the end of his first epistle little children keep yourselves from idols I'm not going to enumerate further if I did I certainly would exclude the things which perhaps are dangerous to me and perhaps enumerate the things which are dangerous to you but oh God so touch our hearts with the blessedness of eternal life that will hold things here sufficiently loosely that they don't come in as an idol which robs us of the enjoyment and power of that which the Lord has so graciously given I read those words in John 14 [00:43:02] simply for this I don't claim to be able to tread where when you think of men like Mr. Kelly and many others who've written so ably on eternal life I don't profess to be able to say very much about it but one thing I have clearly seen and I was reminded at a funeral recently just a week ago yesterday we buried the body of quite a young woman and I happened to find myself sitting opposite her husband who was just in his early 50s and I couldn't say very much and neither could he but he said just pray he said that the Lord would enable me to build my life here he said she's entered on

another life there it brought home to me the fact that [00:44:02] if you live in the good of eternal life at all you certainly prove that it's not at home in this world it's anything but at home I think in the Lord's words in my father's house are many abodes many mansions it's telling us a place that there is a place where eternal life is absolutely at home and where if we're believers at all when we enter in that which has been so graciously given by God here will expand unto all its fullness and the blessedness and the power of it then we shall know I don't say I can provide answers but it seems to me that when the Lord said if it were not so I would have told you there must have been something pretty important about the words in my father's house are many abodes [00:45:02] but I believe this there isn't only the life by which we live there is the life in which we live said of his wife the life in which she lived in this world had ceased and her ability to partake in all those things which made up her life down here had gone the life in which she lived as far as she was concerned in this world was finished but there is another life where eternal life is at home and where the soul of every true saint will expand in all its fullness and where we'll know the blessedness of that which God has given I'm not going to say anything more but when you read the words that we read together these things right we unto you that your joy may be full it only makes me say may God so grant [00:46:02] that apprehending eternal life in all its fullness in the Lord we might know something of its light and blessedness and power whilst we're down here in this world and then the kind of things that fill out the truth that our brother Sidney Thurston was speaking about power for God in assemblies will be seen in its measure and thus whilst we wait for the Lord there'll be a deepening note of glory and praise to him whilst we wait to hear his voice and to be ushered into that world where that which we enjoy will expand to all its fullness and we shall be eternally at home