

# Eternal Life- How to get it.

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*John 5: 20-47.*

## **Seekers for Light.**

*Fourteen Addresses to Edinburgh Students.*

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## **Chapter 8**

### **Eternal Life- How to get it.**

Notice the words of the Lord, at the close of this chapter, where He says: "Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?" We live in a day when people think that what Moses wrote is not to be received. There are doubts about his words. I just want to say to you, before we go into the subject before my mind tonight, that the Lord Jesus Christ puts His stamp upon the writings of Moses, as He says: "Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me." Observe, He distinctly says, Moses wrote of Him. Do not you tell me that Moses did not write that which bears his name, for then Christ was wrong in saying he did? I do not think the Lord Jesus was wrong. Ah no! And He says, Moses wrote of Him. I say this, because we live in a day when so much doubt exists as to the authenticity of Scripture, and many young men are caught in this snare of Satan. It will be a good thing for you if you get your doubts dispelled. Our Lord says, authoritatively: "Moses wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?" (vers. 46, 47). Are we to credit Christ, or not?

Now the point I would fain press on you this evening is the value of the word of the Lord Jesus Christ I think it is important to notice these words of Christ. "If ye believe not his (Moses') writings, how shall ye believe my words?" Do you believe the writings of Moses? You reply, I have my doubts. Thank God, I have not. I am very sure that the Lord Jesus, the Eternal Truth, the Son of the Father, knew exactly what He was saying when He so distinctly stated, — that the writings of Moses bore witness to Himself Moses was a witness, a distinct witness, to Christ; and you will find that the Old Testament Scriptures are in full accord with what we call the New Testament, while the New Testament Scriptures fling great light upon the Old. The New Testament, if rightly apprehended, throws a wonderful light upon what God has given us in figure, type, and shadow in the Old Testament.

But a person may say, — What is the object of the Old Testament? Well, it is really the picture-book of Christ. You will find in it, if you search, that which brings out, by way of illustration, the most precious truths concerning the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the chapter now before us, the Lord adduces four witnesses to Himself, and it is of vast importance that you and I should pay heed to what Jesus says. (1) John the Baptist bore witness of Him: "Ye sent unto John, and *he bare witness* unto the truth" (ver. 33). (2.) "But I have greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, *the same works that I do, bear witness of me*" (ver. 36). (3.) And then, again, "*The Father* himself, which hath sent me, *hath borne witness of me*" (ver. 37). (4.) And, last of all, the Scriptures bear witness of Him: Ye "search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and *they are they which testify of me*" (ver. 39). But He adds, very solemnly, "and ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." Ye "search the scriptures": I can commend you for that, He says; but eternal life is not found in Scripture. "They are they which testify of me. And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." This fourfold testimony to Christ might well convince any heart.

I have no doubt He was then addressing a company of cavilling Jews. I am not addressing a company of cavillers, I trust. I do not think many of you young fellows are of that hopeless class, who despise grace, and refuse the truth. I trust and believe you have come here with a desire to really learn that which will meet the need of your souls, for time, and eternity. I think you are in earnest. I am in earnest, by grace; and trust, by God's help, to show you that the knowledge of Christ is transcendently important. Now, many a young man thinks that it is a poor thing to be a Christian. I say it is the grandest thing possible to be a Christian; and there could not be a better time, for a man to become a Christian, than when he is young. Why? Because, if God spare you to have a long life, how much better will that life be, if spent in the service of the blessed Son of God, than spent in a routine of sin, folly, and unsatisfying pleasure, which never give any real blessing to the soul, even though at the close of your days you may turn to the Lord. I do not think any man who turns to Christ, in the last hours of his life, can look back on his life with pleasure.

Is there a man here this evening who says, I will go on with the things of the flesh and the devil until I am about to be called out of the world, and then I will turn to Jesus? And what will you then give Him? You will give to Jesus the dregs of a badly spent life. What do you think of yourself? I know what you think. You would judge a man who did that to be a downright poltroon. Nevertheless, such is Christ's grace, that even so, you would be received. He says He will not cast out any one that comes to Him. But what I want you to do is to possess Christ as a present, living, loving Saviour. You may have Him, my friends, where you are, this evening. You may have the knowledge of eternal life now, and may go on your way in the sweet and happy service of the Lord, and in the enjoyment of His love; and you may depend upon it, the possession of a good conscience is a great thing; and the possession of eternal life is a wonderful thing. To be in the service of Christ, is infinitely better than being in the service of the devil.

The god of this world knows all his troops; he knows all his subjects. I admit, my friends, he may keep you in peace, and may not make you aware of his government; but our Lord says, "When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace" (Luke 11: 21). And who is the strong man? The devil. And what is his palace? The world. And who are his goods?

Sinners. I was, at one time. Thank God! I am not. If you are not on the Lord's side, you are. Each one is marked. Ah! but you do not like to own the hall-mark. You may depend upon it, God knows those who are His, and the devil knows who are his. Yes, it is very simple. You are either on the Lord's side, or not. Which side are you on? If you have never been to the blessed Lord hitherto, let me urge you tonight to have to do with Him now. For, mark! you must at some time. Every man that faces me tonight must have to do with the Lord Jesus Christ, sooner or later. It may be today. It may be tomorrow. You have no lease of life. You may have taken your lodgings, or your house, for a month, or on a lease; but you have no lease of life, and you cannot tell when you may pass into eternity. Either then, or now, you must have to do with the One whose blessed words we have before us this evening. I pray you to hear them. Oh, hear the words of the blessed Lord! It is of vast importance to give heed to His voice.

You may observe that our Lord speaks of two hours in this fifth of John. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live" (ver. 25). Again, "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment" (vers. 28, 29). You have here brought out the absolute contrast of the two hours; the hour of grace, and the hour of judgment. Mark this! there is a very great difference between "the resurrection of life," and "the resurrection of judgment." It is a common thought that there is going to be a general resurrection by-and-by. Such is not what Scripture teaches; there is no general resurrection. There are two resurrections; the resurrection of life, and the resurrection of judgment.

"Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection," saith Scripture (Rev. 20: 6). The two resurrections are separated by at least a thousand years. There is no doubt about it. In Revelation 20: 4, 5, the risen saints are spoken of as living, and reigning for a thousand years with Christ; and then we read, "But the rest of the dead lived not until the thousand years were finished." The first resurrection takes place before the millennial reign of the Lord Jesus Christ, the second resurrection is after the close of that reign. Be certainly assured that the Lord Jesus will yet reign. He is King of kings, and Lord of lords, and He is going to reign over the earth. The first man lost it; the second Man redeems it. The first man brought the curse into it; and the second Man, the last Adam, will remove that curse, and bring in universal blessing when He comes to reign as King.

The resurrection of life, and the resurrection of judgment, are as different as light and darkness. The resurrection of life is the portion of the man who has Christ, and if dead, when Jesus comes again, he is raised to life. The man who has lived and died in his sins, and has not known Christ, is raised to judgment. And what will that be? Oh! do not you face it. Do not you risk it. Stop, friend, I implore you, do not risk it. I will not attempt to delineate it; how could I? No tongue of man can depict that awful moment when God raises man for judgment. Enough that it is a resurrection of judgment, and every sensible man should flee from it. Every man who has his senses exercised before God will flee from it. The resurrection of life is a resurrection unto blessing. It is the moment when the Lord shall come, and shall take up from the grave His own people, bought by His own blood, and who, through grace, have found Him to be their

Saviour. The resurrection of judgment is when unblessed men will stand before the great white throne, and be judged according to their deeds.

Do you think, for a moment, that a man who has spent a life in sin will not be judged? How can he get off in the judgment day? How can you get off then, if the question of forgiven sin be unsettled? The whole genius of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ makes that impossible; because the great truth of the gospel is that, after sin entered into the scene where man had fallen, and before the moment when God must judge it, Christ has stepped in, and borne that judgment. Consequently the believer never goes into judgment, which is exactly what our scripture affirms. Jesus says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live" (vers. 24, 25).

And what is the result of hearing the Son of God? "They that hear shall live." What kind of life? It is life eternal! Not life in this world! Not life in this scene! You have that already, but it is forfeited. You cannot tell how long you may have it. Thank God, the believer has eternal life. In that 24th verse our Lord Jesus Christ brings before us the present, the past, and the future. About the present, He says, "He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, *hath* everlasting life;" then as regards the past, He says the believer "*is passed* from death unto life;" and if he look at the future, "*shall not come* into condemnation." The whole horizon of the soul is filled up by that one verse. How beautiful! How simple! "He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me." Do I hear His voice? Do I hear His word? Do I believe the Father sent Him? I do, from the bottom of my heart, and I confess that He is what He says He is. I confess Him Son of God, and Son of Man. I confess my need of Him, and my faith in Him. And who sent Him? The Father sent the Son. What a wonderful thing that the Father, the Eternal Father, should have sent His Son to be the Saviour of the world. Yes, Scripture says, "The Saviour of the world." Wonderful and amazing truth! Yes, the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world, and that Son went into death to take you and me out of it. He died on the cross, and presented His own precious blood as an atonement for sin, so that man might be washed in that precious blood, and be presented to God, in all its cleansing efficacy, the recipient of eternal life.

Observe that the Lord says here, "He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, *hath everlasting life*." Life possessed, is the point here. And what was our state before we lived? Dead. Mark that. You may have natural life; I admit it. You may have plenty of it. Perhaps it is not a life you would care to have exposed. You would, most probably, not like everybody to know what the deeds and doings of that life have been. That is not my concern. God knows that. My friend, look here, you have not spiritual life; but the Gospel of John brings before us the blessed truth of Jesus coming into this world, revealing God to us, and bringing to us the very thing we had not. There are two sides of the gospel. There is what I call the negative and the positive side of the gospel. What is the negative side? The negative side is the meeting of my need. And what is the positive side? That which comes to me, and becomes mine in the Person of Christ. I will show you what I mean.

In the First Epistle of John, we read, "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him." He

brings us what we had not got — life. That is the positive side. But then it adds, "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." There is the negative side of the gospel. Christ takes away what we had got — our sins. You see the gospel, when it comes to a man, tells him of his sins. That is naturally the first thing. When a man is touched by the Spirit of God, is quickened and awakened, he immediately thinks of his sins. Quite right! Think about *your* sins, for sins you have. You are a sinner, and you ought to know how you have sinned. The first thing that is touched is your conscience, and it is a blessed thing when conscience whispers, "Thou art the man."

But what do I see the grace of Christ doing for my sins? I see them all blotted out in His own precious blood. My conscience accuses me of sin, and then comes the thought, I have not a life that will suit God; I have not one thing suitable to God. I get the sense that I am dead towards God, and then I hear, "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might *live through him*." God proposes to give you life, eternal life; and observe, "the *gift* of God is eternal life." You cannot win it, or earn it. You cannot buy it, and do not deserve it. But God gives us it.

I know the wages of sin is death, but what do I see? Christ, if I may so speak, taking those wages, that you and I might be saved. I see the cross, and the work He has done on the cross. He has taken all the penalties and demerit of sin, borne sins, atoned for them, and, thank God I blotted them out. "Now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (Heb. 9: 26). Look, look at the cross. There my sins have been borne, and have disappeared.

See then, as the fruit of the cross, how God can righteously and freely give us life, eternal life. My dear fellows, have you this life? The man who has it not is in a poor case. How frail is the life you have. Only this week some one told me of one of your comrades who died just a week ago. He felt ill; a little operation was performed, and in three days he was gone into eternity! That is number two this session. My dear friend, do not you think you had better be ready for eternity? Do you think you would be a worse man for being a Christian? Suppose you are going to be a doctor, do you think you would be a worse doctor for being a Christian?

But, says some one, I am going into a line of life where I cannot be a Christian. Well then, clear out of it; that is all I have to say. Why ensure your soul's eternal damnation? If I cannot take Christ into the line I am going to take up, then I will clear out of it. The point is this, I have to go into eternity. You have eternity before you. How will you spend it? Where will you spend it? And with whom will you spend it? You may not know; I know what my eternity is going to be. It is to be an eternity with Christ Thank God! I know that I have eternal life, and every Christian should know that, for "He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life; and shall not come into condemnation," shall never be judged, "but is passed from death unto life," says the Saviour.

Now how does this come to pass? The Lord tells us, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live." This hour began with His own ministry on earth, and is not finished; though He has finished the work of redemption, and is now at the right hand of God in glory. But who are

the dead? All who have not heard and believed Him are dead. Those who have, live, for "the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live." Nothing could be simpler, nor more sure. "Verily, verily," is a good foundation for faith to repose on. It is not often we got that in Scripture; but rarely did Jesus use those words. I conclude that the Lord so speaks to press us to listen to Him. Mighty indeed are the results of hearing the voice of the Son of God. "They that hear shall live." Blessed is the man that has heard the voice of the Son of God. I know it. I believe there are some sitting here tonight, who can say, I have heard the voice of the Son of God speak to me in these students' meetings. They were human lips through which it came, but it was His voice I heard, the voice of the Son of God. His word sank into my heart, and I am quickened.

It is important to notice the difference in the character of the two hours of which our Lord speaks here. During the first hour He quickens into life by His word: "For as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself;" and beside this the Father "hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of Man. Marvel not at this; for the hour is coming in which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth." There is the second hour, the hour of judgment Do you suppose the patience of God will always last? Do you think the first hour is endless, and that the long-suffering of God with man's sin is to be infinite and eternal? Make no mistake, the first hour is about to close. "The long-suffering of our Lord is salvation" (2 Peter 3: 15); but the hour-glass is to be turned. When, God only knows; but the turning thereof will introduce judgment in place of grace. God is giving you now the opportunity of being saved. Hear what the Lord Jesus says: "These things I say, that ye might be saved" (ver. 34). Are you saved? Not yet! Do you not want to be saved? He wants you to be saved. How may you be saved? Only by Him. Will works do it? A dead man cannot work, and that is what you are. Works cannot do it. I know people think they can be saved by works. That is an egregious mistake!

I recollect the time when I was not converted. I began to think of my soul, and I thought I must do something. I used to set myself a hard Bible-task, which I thought was meritorious. I tried to master the prophecies of Isaiah; but I soon got tired of them. I was only a poor dead man, trying to work out a salvation I did not possess. I was dead when I began, and dead when I finished. Of course I failed; but God stepped in, and the Son of God spoke to me shortly after. Blessed be His name, I heard His voice. Have you heard it? Oh, my friend, hear it now. "The hour is coming, and now is." That is the hour of grace. It is a long one, I admit. Take the figure of the hour-glass. The hour of God's grace has been running on from the moment in which Christ then spoke. His death, resurrection, and ascension to glory have transpired, and still that hour has run on. But it is well-nigh spent, and our Lord says another "hour is coming," and what will then take place? The hour-glass is turned, and what has been the hour of mercy and salvation becomes the hour of judgment. Do not you think that it is a great mercy that hour-glass is not yet turned, because you are not saved yet? When turned, the unbeliever will be found without salvation, and without the possibility of being saved. It might be turned tonight. In the meantime, thank God, it is not turned, and there is yet another opportunity for you and me to reach the Saviour, if we have not yet done so.

If you have not yet come to Him, who says in the tenth of John, "I am the door," hear His voice now. You may be saved tonight if you will enter in. Christ says, I am the door. Come, He

says, enter in by Me. It is Christ you must know. It is Christ you need. I believe many of you have a longing, and a desire for Christ. You have a longing desire for rest that the world cannot give. I will ask you a simple question, Has the world satisfied you? No. I find a man saying, "I am going to a ball tomorrow night, and to something else on Tuesday, and I would like something else on Wednesday — I must have a little fun." A little will not do for me. I must have something that is perpetual; I must have something that is perennial; and what is that? The grace and love of Christ. That grace and love of Christ fill the heart with peace and joy. Perhaps you say, I thought it was a dull thing to be a Christian. That is a thorough mistake. The only really bright thing I know is to be a Christian. Everything connected with Christ is blessed and durable. Every earthly joy is transient The world's laughter is vanity, for "as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the fool. This also is vanity" (Ecc. 7: 6). That fire soon burns out, that is the meaning of it The laughter of the fool is like the crackling of thorns under a pot, there is no durability about it. There is no durability in what you are engaged in. There is no durability in the pleasures of sin. They are only for a season, and you have to meet their consequences and pains in eternity; but the love of Christ fills the heart with joy in this world and for ever. He saves you and lets you know that you are saved.

But you say, Is it not presumption to say that? How can it be presumption, if He does it? Suppose some one were to jump into the water and seize you when you were drowning, would you think it was presumption for you to say, you owed your life to the man who risked his own to save yours? The reason you are not sure of your salvation is, because you have been thinking you have something to do in regard to it. It will not do. You have not been brought to the point of seeing that you can do nothing whatever, and that you must rest alone on the love and work of Christ. Until I see I am hopelessly lost, I shall never give up my struggling. Let me illustrate my meaning. A man had fallen overboard. The harbour was deep, and there were no boats about. The man was drowning, for he could not swim, and the cry rang out for help. There was one man, a capital swimmer, near at hand, who had saved many from drowning, and he was called. "Jim, you are wanted, there is a man overboard." When Jim came down to the spot, everybody thought he would jump in at once. Instead of that, he quietly looked at the struggling man. There he was in the water, splashing, and using all his strength to keep afloat The crowd eagerly cried to Jim, who held his peace. "Go in, man. It is a shame. That man will be drowned."

The man went down, but he came up again, and when he came up the first time, he came up pretty strong. He could splash a good bit, and showed a good deal of strength. Again the crowd urged Jim; "Coward," they called him; but Jim held his peace, and the man went down again. Then Jim took off his jacket and his boots. The man came up the second time, and still did a good deal of splashing and struggling. At last he flung up his hands, exhausted, and was about to sink again, when like an arrow Jim dashed to his side, put him on his shoulder, and brought him ashore, and saved him. He was then asked, "Why in the world did you not go in sooner?" His reply was simple: "Because he was too strong; if I had gone in at first, he would have dragged me down, and I should not have been able to drag him out."

That is just the difficulty with many as to their souls. You are too strong. You have been doing too much. You think you must bring something, and you must do something. That is not it. You are without strength, a poor sinner, and must let Jesus save you. The gospel is very simple, and very blessed. Listen! "When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the

ungodly" (Rom. 5: 6). It is all the work of Christ. There is no work on your, or my side. Salvation is by faith, and faith only, not by works. "Unto him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness" (Rom. 4: 5). It is the work of Christ, done for us, that meets the claims of God. Then comes the sweet word of the gospel, which convicts me as a lost, ruined, and undone sinner, and then I listen to Christ's blessed voice, saying, "Come unto me and I will give you rest." I listen and believe, and, as I believe, I pass from death unto life. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming. and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live." You receive life, eternal life, from the Son of God. But there is a second hour coming, and a very solemn hour it is, for it is the hour of judgment. Will the Christian come into it? Never. The Christian will not be judged. "He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation (or judgment), but is passed from death unto life" (ver. 24). And why will not the Christian be judged. Because the Saviour has been judged for him; and, so the Lord says here, the man who believes in Me will not be judged, he shall not come into judgment.

Elsewhere we read, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8: 1). The second resurrection is unto judgment, but the first resurrection is unto life. Then the Lord will come for His own people, and rescue all those whose hearts have been yielded up to him, not merely in word, but in reality. Is there a link between your heart and the Saviour, who lives in glory? If so, He says, "He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." On the other hand, the man who does not believe the gospel is on his way to judgment. That is a poor look-out, a dark look-out. If you are a wise man, you will gladly say, Christ for me. Let others make their choice as they will, but Christ for me! is the language of my heart; and believing on Him, I hear Him say, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth in me hath everlasting life" (John 6: 47). That is most assuring. Not less so is that verse with a top and a bottom, but no middle: "He that believeth on the Son *hath everlasting* life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3: 36). Which half of the verse are you in, the top or the bottom half? If the bottom, the wrath of God abides on you; if the top, you possess eternal life. Make sure of where you are.