

Eternal Life

John 5: 8, 21-25; John 15: 8; John 17: 1-3.

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I have a desire to follow the word which came so helpfully before us last night in relation to both Enoch and Noah walking with God. I will endeavour to show how Divine Persons Themselves enable us to walk with God. We may well ask ourselves, Where am I to get this power to enable me to walk with God while passing through this hostile scene? And it is in mind to show from these Scriptures what that power is and how we obtain it.

The instance of the man at the pool of Bethesda, with which we began, brings before us one of those comprehensive pictures of what the law could not do owing to the weakness of man. Given to man on the ground of human responsibility it only brought to light his incapability of pleasing God or of walking with God. Turning back in thought for a moment to Jeremiah 5, we read of God saying to the prophet, "Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth; and I will pardon it," v. 1. There we read of God looking for a man to solve this problem of human weakness through sin. Here at the pool of Bethesda when our Lord speaks to this impotent man he says, "Sir, I have no man." God needed a man, and man needed a man to meet the difficulties which had come upon him through sin, in order that he might be found with power to move here for the pleasure of God. This man was **lying** there, a weak though living witness of the law in its claims. For thirty and eight years he had been lying there upon the very brink of blessing yet totally unable to obtain it. He needed to **do** something of which he was incapable and he lay there so long as a witness of what the law could not do for him because of **his** impotency to do that one thing, step down. He speaks thus in answer to our Lord, "I have no man," and learns that He was the Man for whom both God and man were looking. Jesus speaks in words of power to the impotent man, "Rise, take up thy bed, and walk."

Three things are discerned in these statements. The first involves **obedience**; the Lord said to Him "Rise." The second statement involved **power**; "take up thy bed." The third involved **movement**; "walk." So in the combination of these three things we see him in movement; not now a weak witness of what the law could not do, but a moving, powerful witness of what the Son could do, causing a man to rise up and to walk here in obedience to the Divine communication given to him. This is a beautiful picture of the working of Divine Persons in relation to every one of us. A movement first on the Divine side, for the man could not have come to the Son of God, He comes to the man with power and authority, **speaks** a word of power and causes him to rise and move here, a witness to the power of the Son of God. This instance gives us a preface to the teaching of our Lord of which we read a little further down.

"For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom He will," v. 21. This word "raiseth" has the same bearing as the word "rise" in v. 8. It does not mean resurrection — a thought which has caused much confusion about this verse — but a raising up in relation to God. Should you ask me to show some of those whom the Father had raised up and quickened, it would suffice to point to the two men of whom our brother spoke last night — Enoch and Noah. There are many more found in such places as Heb. 11, but these two will suffice to demonstrate the truth which is before us. They were men in whose hearts the Father had been working — not known

to them as the Father — yet the Son now tells us it was the Father. He had raised them up in His own interest and for His own pleasure and having communicated life to them He gave them power to walk here in communion with Himself. He caused them to rise; He communicated life to them in quickening power and the result was they walked with Him. It was to works like these the Son was referring and now adds, "even so the Son quickeneth whom He will."

Two questions have been raised regarding this. Why does it not say that the Son raiseth up the dead? Why does it say only, "the Son quickeneth whom He will? If you turn to John 6: 37, I think we have the answer there. "All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me; and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out." It is still the work of the Father to raise up, but He brings those whom he has raised up to the Son Who quickens whom He will. We see this same truth yet again in the other verses we have read. With a view to opening this out a little further we have also read vv. 24, 25. What does the Father use to raise us up? The gospel, and that we have in v. 24, "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." God moved in His compassionate love towards us when we were dead in trespasses and sins, but the Father moved towards us to give effect to His counsel of grace concerning the children He had marked out for blessing. How does He bring these children to light? By the gospel. This is what He has used to begin that work in our souls by which He has raised us up; and on the principle of faith, having received that word, He has brought us to Himself. We have **heard** that word. The two outstanding things connected with the kingdom in John 3, are salvation and eternal life, and both these we have through believing the gospel. This verse assures us that all who hear that word and believe it have eternal life. The Father has used the gospel to raise us up that we might live to Him. We have believed on "**Him**" — the way into this blessing from our side.

In v. 25, it is what the Son is doing. "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." Not the physical dead, need we add, but those who through sin were dead to God. In v. 24, we are said to hear the **word**, but in v. 25 we are said to hear His **voice**. This verse leaves no doubt that we have eternal life by hearing the voice of the Son of God. We may say the way into it from our side is by believing the gospel but in that gospel is the voice of the Son of God and this it is which quickens and gives us life. The gospel is presented to us on the ground of responsibility but the voice comes with it in Divine sovereignty. We believe on the Father, and we are quickened by the Son. Thus we see the Father and the Son working, the one raising up and the other quickening. Such I believe is the teaching of these two verses. I can see the ground of responsibility in v. 24 but I can also see the ground of sovereignty in v. 25. The voice of the Son of God is in the gospel and quickens us into this wonderful realm of eternal life. He had already said in this chapter, "as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them," v. 21. The Father had been doing **both** of these things before the Son came into Manhood. The Father is still raising up the dead, but is now bringing those raised to the Son; they hear His voice and are thus quickened by Him. It is the power of His voice, demonstrated in the man at the pool. Why is the Father operating and why is the Son operating? Why does the Father raise us up and why does the Son quicken us? It is to bring us into eternal life as both of these verses clearly show. What then is eternal life? **It is the power by which we live in the love of God.** It is the wonderful life surging in our souls which gives us to feel that we cannot live without Divine Persons. We desire to move in the company of the Father and the Son, for this life can only find its outlet in the circle where the Father and the Son are at home. If we refer to the epistle of John, it is the circle of the fellowship into which all saints are brought; the atmosphere of life, and light, and love where, in the power of the Spirit of God, the saints are brought into fellowship with the Father and the Son.

In John 17 we have explained to us a little further what is involved in this gift of eternal life; a most difficult thing to explain, as all who attempt to help the saints on this matter must know. Yet we do have some of its effects clearly stated, and these we may see in this passage. We know the moment had now come for the Son to leave the world and go to the Father. He had communicated many things to the disciples as recorded in chapters 13, 14, 15 and 16. Now, as He is about to leave them and go to the Father, He speaks to the Father about the saints and also opens out in some detail that wonderful realm of life, and light, and love, and glory; first in relation to Himself, then ultimately for the saints, that is, glory. Ere looking at this, I refer to other Scriptures where His glory shines out. In John 9 where we read of the man that was born blind we are told that sign was given that "the works of God should be made manifest in him." Then regarding Lazarus in John 11, it was "for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby." As subjects of the work of Divine Persons, we have been enlightened by the works of the Father and have been made to live through the quickening voice of the Son of God. Again in John 13 we hear the Son saying, "Now is the Son of Man glorified." This of course referred to the cross and its results. He is glorified as the Son of Man by giving His life **for** others and glorified as Son of God by giving life **to** others. I say this in view of the first request in this prayer, "glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son also may glorify Thee." Keep in mind what we have said — the Son of God is glorified in giving life to others — as it helps us to understand what is in this verse, so far as we are concerned.

Not one of us has the slightest doubt that every step the Son of God took in this world glorified the Father. Now He is leaving the world and going to the Father to be in a place of glory instead of in the place of subjection and obedience and humbleness which marked Him here. We hear Him saying that universal might and dominion are to be placed in His hands in the glory. What is He going to do with it? With universal administration and the disposal of all flesh in His hands, He is going to do from the glory, what He had always done while in this world — glorify the Father. He does not ask to be glorified that He may establish the kingdom in manifestation. This will be so in its own time, but that is not His request at this time. He is asking to be glorified that He might continue to glorify the Father from the glory. "Glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son also may glorify Thee." We see here again the truth we began with in John 5, the Father raising up and bringing to the Son. He speaks of "as many as Thou hast given Him." Still again of "the men which Thou gavest Me out of the world." Here they are, raised up of the Father and brought to the Son and the Son speaks of giving them "eternal life."

In v. 3 He says that eternal life results in the knowledge of the Father and the knowledge of the Son. We have this conscious knowledge of both the Father and the Son and are thus brought into fellowship with Them by the Spirit in the power of eternal life. We know that we know the Father and we know that we know the Son. Thus we are in the present enjoyment of this life for we are in communion with the Father and the Son. Life can only be seen and enjoyed in movement, hence eternal life causes us to move in communion with Divine Persons. We began with this thought of movement in John 5, and here we see how that movement is brought about with each one of us as moving in that circle in relation to the Father and the Son. All this is in view of walking with God to-day.

Now just as natural life is seen in certain movements, so eternal life is seen in certain movements. Have we this gift only because we have believed and have this blessed fellowship opened out to us? No, for we now have something added to that, living not only to the Father but living on account of the Father. This is what is involved in the Son saying "that Thy Son also may glorify Thee." How does He continue to glorify the Father from the glory? In us, beloved; that is the only way He can do it, and that is why He gives us "eternal life." It is to continue in us that which ever came out in Himself when in this world He lived to the Father for His glory. "I do always those things that please Him." We have

now the same life in which the Son lived to the Father, producing in us the features which came to light in the Son, and to amplify this, I have also read from the chapter where fruitbearing is the great subject.

"Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be My disciples," John 15: 8. When the Son was in this world the Father looked down upon Him and found in His every movement that which delighted His heart. Fruit is the manifestation of the features of eternal life. To us, in type, it is the life of the vine producing its own fruit in the branches. We who abide in Him have His life that we may reproduce His features, and when we do the Father is now glorified in the saints as He was ever glorified in the Son. Can we doubt this from His own words, "Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit." He adds to that, "so shall ye be My disciples." Not only in name surely. It involves that we are seeking to be in His company, growing to be like Him and so manifesting His features here for the pleasure of the Father. It is thus we bear "much fruit" and the Son continues to glorify the Father while in the glory. It is thus to-day we walk with God and can be found moving through this world for the pleasure of the Father.