

# A Closer Walk With God

## Gaining Everlasting Life as a Disciple of Christ

### INTRODUCTION:

- I. At the beginning of His ministry, Jesus met one evening with a Pharisee and ruler of the Jews by the name of Nicodemus.
  - A. He had most likely been among those who had seen some of the signs and wonders Jesus had done in Jerusalem, and no doubt wondered if this could be the Messiah.
    1. But during that conversation, Jesus not only surprised Nicodemus by telling him that those who expect to enter the kingdom of God must be born again, Jesus also told him God sent His Son to the world for one primary mission.
    - 2 **John 3:16-17** – *For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. 17 For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.*
    3. Jesus came to not only offer salvation from sins, but to offer everlasting life to all who will believe on Him.

- II. Then, some three years later, on the evening before His crucifixion, Jesus met one last time with His disciples.
  - A. During the course of that evening, Jesus taught them many wonderful truths.
    - 1. Among the things Jesus said was this: **John 14:1-4** – *"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. 2 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. 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. 4 And where I go you know, and the way you know."*
  - B. The disciples still had not grasped the fact that Jesus was about to be crucified on the cross.
    - 1. And so, Thomas asks, **John 14:5** – *"Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?"*
    - 2. Therefore, Jesus replied, **John 14:6** – *"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."*
      - a. Jesus is simply telling his disciples that He's going to return to the Father in heaven – that's where he's going.
      - b. And the way to the Father is only through Jesus Christ.

- c. And the reason why Jesus Christ is the only way to the Father is simply because he is truth personified, and he is life personified.
      - d. Which is another way of saying that Jesus is the only true and living way to the Father in heaven.
    - 3. And, because Jesus is the only true and living way to the Father, that makes Jesus the only true and living way to everlasting life.
      - a. He is not only the true and living way to the Father, He is also the only true and living way to everlasting or eternal life.
- II. In our final lesson in the series "A Closer Walk With God" I want us to take a close look at this subject and understand what is involved in "Gaining Eternal Life as a Disciple of Christ."
  - A. But when we consider the phrase "eternal life" there arises a slight problem.
    - 1. The phrase "eternal life" is used two ways in the Scriptures.
      - a. In most instances the phrase "eternal life" is used to speak of a future, "never-ending life" in heaven after this life is over.
      - b. But on other occasions the phrase "everlasting life" is used to speak of the "life" of those who have obeyed the gospel of Christ. It's an "eternal life" we enjoy now.

2. For example, this latter way of using the phrase "eternal life" appears in some of the writings of the apostle John.
  - a. **1 John 5:13** – *These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.*
- B. From this we understand that eternal life begins when we believe in the name of the Son of God – when we act on our belief through obedience – and this eternal life continues throughout all eternity.
  1. In essence, our eternal life has already begun – if we have come to Jesus Christ in complete faith and obedience.
  2. And our eternal life will continue as long as we remain faithful to the Lord.
- C. The scriptures also speak of the "promise" of eternal life, and the "hope" of eternal life. What does that mean?
  1. Eternal life is promised only in the sense that our eternal life is based on the promises of God and the promises of Jesus Christ.
  2. And eternal life is a hope only in the sense that it is a confident expectation, and something fully anticipated.
    - a. We don't hope for eternal life in the sense that we desire something that may or may not happen.

(1). It's not where we say, "I sure hope I go to heaven when I die."

- b. Our hope of eternal life is confident expectation because it is based on the promises of God and of Jesus Christ.

## **BODY:**

- I. To understand more about eternal life, let's start by understanding some things the Bible teaches.
  - A. Eternal life is not something that people accidentally stumble into, nor is it something the majority of people will find.
    - 1. Jesus said: **Matthew 7:13-14** – *"Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. 14 Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it."*
      - b. The "life" Jesus is referring to is eternal life in heaven, and the "destruction" is referring to eternal destruction in hell.
      - c. Notice, Jesus said few will find the way that leads to life but many will take the way that leads to destruction.
    - 2. But why? This goes contrary to what most people in the religious world think. Most believe good people of all religious beliefs will inherit eternal life.

B. The sad truth is that many moral, and sincerely religiously devout people will choose "a way" – they will choose churches that personally appeal to them rather than being concerned about what pleases the Lord.

1. But the apostle Paul warned Timothy about this very thing:

**2 Timothy 4:2-4** – *Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. 3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; 4 and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.*

C. Another reason why so many will be lost is because they believe they are followers of Jesus, but they won't do His will or they don't continue to follow the Lord's will.

1. Jesus warned about this in the Sermon on the Mount.

a. **Matthew 7:21-23** – *"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. 22 Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your*

*name?' 23 And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'"*

2. Here are people who either were prophesying in His name, casting our demons in His name and doing many wonderful works in His name, or who thought they were doing all these things.
  - a. They may have been those who actually were given spiritual gifts, or who thought they had all these spiritual gifts.
  - b. But the bottom line is that they were no longer doing His will.
3. If we get nothing else out of this passage, we need to learn this. We will not go to heaven on past accomplishments or past faithfulness.
  - a. Not only do we need to do the Lord's will rather than our own will.
  - b. We must continue to do the Lord's will all the days of our life.
  - c. As the Lord told the saints in Smyrna: **Revelation 2:11** – *Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.*
4. Look at all these passages about the need to persevere to the very end of our life.
  - a. Jesus: **Matthew 10:22** – *"...he who endures to the end will be saved."*

- b. Jesus: **John 8:31** – *"If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed."*
- c. Jesus: **John 15:4** – *"Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me."*
- d. Speaking of the church in Antioch: **Acts 13:43** – *"Now when the congregation had broken up, many of the Jews and devout proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas, who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God."*
- e. Paul to Corinth: **1 Corinthians 15:1-2** – *"Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, 2 by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you..."*
- f. Paul: **Galatians 6:9** – *"And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart."*
- g. Paul to Timothy: **2 Timothy 2:11-12** – *"This is a faithful saying: For if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him. 12 If we endure, we shall also reign with Him."*
- h. **Hebrews 6:11-12** – *"And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end,*



*12 that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises."*

- i. **Hebrews 10:35-38** – *Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. 36 For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise: 37 "For yet a little while, and He who is coming will come and will not tarry. 38 Now the just shall live by faith; but if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him."*
  - j. **2 Peter 3:17-18** – *"You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; 18 but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."*
  - k. **Revelation 21:7** – *"He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son."*
5. From Matthew to Revelation the message is the same – faithfulness to the end.
- a. Jesus promises that those who overcome – who remain faithful to the end – shall inherit eternal life in heaven.

- b. Jesus is the way to eternal life to all those who obey Him and do His will, and who continue to remain faithful all the days of their lives.

II. Finally, let's take a few moments to understand why Jesus is the only way to eternal life. The Bible teaches that there are several reasons why Jesus is the only way to eternal life. For example:

- A. Jesus is the only way to eternal life because He is the One who will be our Judge – it is before His throne that we will all appear.

1. **John 12:44-47** – *Then Jesus cried out and said, "He who believes in Me, believes not in Me but in Him who sent Me. 45 And he who sees Me sees Him who sent Me. 46 I have come as a light into the world, that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness. 47 And if anyone hears My words and does not believe, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world... "*

- a. In other words, Jesus didn't come into the world to be the kind of judge the Jews were expecting – to bring judgment at that time against the unrighteous and corrupt religious leaders in Jerusalem, and against the occupying Roman forces throughout the land.

b. But the time will come when there will be a judgment, and the basis of that judgment will be whether or not we have kept His Word.

2. **John 12:48-50** – *He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day. 49 For I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak. 50 And I know that His command is everlasting life. Therefore, whatever I speak, just as the Father has told Me, so I speak."*
3. At that time, Jesus will be the Judge: **John 5:22-23** – *For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son, 23 that all should honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him.*
4. The apostle Paul affirmed this in his letter to the church at Rome: **Romans 14:10-12** – *For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. 11 For it is written: "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God." 12 So then each of us shall give account of himself to God.*

5. Paul said the same thing to the church at Corinth: **1 Corinthians 5:10** – *For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.*
  6. Therefore, since we will all appear before Jesus Christ and be judged by His Word, then there should be no doubt about the fact that His teaching – including His teachings through the writings of the apostles – are the only way to eternal life.
- B. But there is another way in which Jesus is the only way to eternal life – He is the only One who could prepare a place in heaven for us, and who will come again to take us home.
1. **John 14:1-3** – *"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. 2 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. 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also."*
  2. These are some of the most comforting words Jesus ever spoke.
    - a. Jesus has gone to His Father's house (to heaven itself) to prepare a place for us.

- (1). Think about that. Jesus has gone to where God dwells to prepare a very particular, special, unique place that has been made ready for us – for you and for me as the children of God.
  - b. Peter wrote about this very thing: **1 Peter 1:3-4** – *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you...*
3. But how can we be sure that we really have this incorruptible and undefiled inheritance reserved in heaven for us?
  - a. Peter says the promise is based on the living hope we have through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.
  - b. It is the resurrection of Jesus that proves beyond any doubt that He truly is the Christ, the Son of the Living God.
4. Therefore, Jesus was able to promise His disciples that He is going to His Father's house (to heaven itself) to prepare a place for us.
5. And, because Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God, He alone is able to give us the assurance that He will come again and receive us unto Himself so that we can also be where He is.

## CONCLUSION:

- I. I want to remind you again of the wonderful claim Jesus made.
  - A. Immediately after telling His disciples that He is going away to prepare a place in heaven for them, He said this:
    1. **John 14:6** – *"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the father except through Me."*
    2. Jesus is the true and living way:
      - a. The way to a better life – an abundant and fulfilling life.
      - b. The way to forgiveness of our sins which was accomplished by Jesus paying the penalty of death we should have paid because of our sins, and by cleansing us of our sin by offering his blood as a sacrifice of our sins.
      - c. The way to God, by helping us comprehend the nature of God and by making it possible for us to be free of sin so that we can approach God as our Father in heaven.
      - d. And finally, the way to eternal life in heaven after this life is over, because He alone will be our Judge, and He alone prepared a place in heaven for us, and is coming again to take us home.

- II. There is simply no way we can deny the fact of the second coming of Jesus Christ, nor can we deny the fact of the final judgment.
  - A. Both events are affirmed as fact by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.
    - 1. But that day will be greeted by some of us completely different than by others.
      - a. Some will greet that day with great joy and thanksgiving.
      - b. Others will greet that day with terror and dread.
  - B. The reason for this difference is simply because some will be faithful followers of Jesus Christ, and others will not.
    - 1. For those who obey the gospel of Jesus Christ and remain faithful to the end, Paul wrote these encouraging words:
      - a. **1 Thessalonians 4:15-17** – *For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. 16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we*

*shall always be with the Lord. 18 Therefore comfort one another with these words.*

2. But for those who refuse to obey the gospel of Christ, and who do not faithfully follow Jesus Christ, the apostle Paul wrote this about them:
  - a. **2 Thessalonians 1:6-10** – . . . *it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, 7 and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, 8 in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, 10 when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed.*
- C. Since the second coming of Christ and the final judgment are inescapable, which of these two passages will apply to you?
  1. Will you rise to meet the Lord and always be with the Lord, or will you be punished with everlasting destruction?



2. The answer to that question depends on whether or not you know God and have obeyed the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.
  - a. If you haven't done this, then you need to be baptized into Christ for the remission of your sins now.
  - b. If you have obeyed the gospel but haven't remained faithful to the Lord, then you still have an opportunity to repent and ask the Lord for forgiveness.