

We have now established that, just as Christ was raised from the dead in a natural body, clothed with immortality, we, too, will be raised at the end of time with immortal bodies, living a life everlasting.

But, what does it mean to live a life everlasting. What comfort is there in a life everlasting for us?

**I experience now already the beginning of eternal joy that a Spirit-filled life brings; and after this life I know that I shall possess this Spirit-filled life perfectly and eternally, the likeness of which no eye has ever seen nor ear has ever heard, neither can it enter into the heart or imagination of man. It is a life in which I can praise God forever.**

Our entire lives, beliefs and actions are predicated upon this one solemn truth, that we, whose names have been entered into the book of life before creation, would end up in the presence of God glorifying Him forever.

If God created man for that purpose, it is that which man will end up doing.

Psalm 73:24 - 28 With Your counsel You will guide me, and afterward receive me to glory. <sup>25</sup>Whom have I in heaven but You? And besides You, I desire nothing on earth. <sup>26</sup>My flesh and my heart may fail, But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. <sup>27</sup>For, behold, those who are far from You will perish; You have destroyed all those who are unfaithful to You. <sup>28</sup>But as for me, the nearness of God is my good; I have made the Lord GOD my refuge, that I may tell of all Your works.

John 17:20 - 24 "I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; <sup>21</sup>that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me. <sup>22</sup>"The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; <sup>23</sup>I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me. <sup>24</sup>"Father, I desire that they also,

whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.

Rom 11:36 For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.

1Co 10:31 Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

To properly understand the meaning of life everlasting and the joy and comfort that it brings to us even today, as the crowning point of our entire salvation and life, let us study the following seven questions in this regard:

- I. What is everlasting life?
- II. Who gives everlasting life?
- III. To whom is everlasting life given?
- IV. Why is everlasting life given?
- V. How is everlasting life given?
- VI. When is everlasting life given?
- VII. Whether, and from what origin may we be assured of everlasting life?

#### I. WHAT IS EVERLASTING LIFE?

This question may not be easy to answer because "*No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him.*" (1Cor 2:9) We may, however, form some faint idea of what eternal life is, based on what Scripture reveals to us.

Life may in general be defined as the very being of that which lives: angels, living beings and plants.

In humans life is their living soul, the essential form of life. Man is set apart from the rest of creation in many ways of which the most important is that God breathed life into him

after creating him. No other facet of creation received this "living breath" from God.

Gen 2:7 Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.

Knowing this, let us now define life more fully: natural life is the existence of a living soul within a body that is animated and acting like a living being. It is the perfection of the soul's direction of the body accomplishing those works that are proper to that which has life. It is the adaptability of a living being to effect such things that are proper to it. These can all be determined by virtue of the union that exists between the body and the soul.

For a thing to be everlasting, one of three things needs to be present:

1. It must have no beginning and no end, as God himself is.
2. It must have no beginning, but and end, as the decrees of God.
3. It must have a beginning, but no end, as the angels, and so on.

It is in the last category that our heavenly life is called everlasting, by which we mean that while it has a beginning, it will have no end. The everlasting life of man is the eternal being of man, regenerated and glorified, which will consist in having the image of God perfectly restored in him. It was in this state he was first created, having perfect wisdom, righteousness, and happiness, or being endowed with the true knowledge and love of God, in connection with eternal joy. To be able to correctly know and love God belongs equally as much to spiritual life as it does to the natural, because "*...the man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned. The spiritual man makes judgments about all things, but he himself is not subject to any man's judgment:*" (1Cor 2:14, 15)

Everlasting life is the perfect restoration of the image of God, with eternal joy and delight in God, heavenly glory, and the full fruition of all those good things, which are necessary for a state of perfect happiness. It is the perfect conformity of man with God, consisting in the true and perfect knowledge and love of God, and in the glory both of the soul and body of man. Consider the following two points that we may have a proper understanding of what constitutes everlasting life:

1. A union of both our body and soul with God.
2. Conformity with God flows out of this union the same way an effect proceeds from its cause. It consists of a clear and correct knowledge of God, together with his will and works; in righteousness, perfect joy and delight in God. Our bodies shall be radiated with inexpressible glory and shine like the sun. We shall have a sufficiency of all good things pertaining to true and perfect happiness.

Everlasting life consists of the eternal habitation of God in the believer through the Holy Spirit, in a true and perfect knowledge of God and of his works and his will. The Holy Spirit kindles in the heart of the believer a true and perfect wisdom and righteousness. The Holy Spirit conforms perfectly all the strength and powers of the believer's mind and will with the mind and will of God with respect to both the body and soul.

God gives this joy freely by and for the sake of Christ, and is begun already in this life to be fully perfected in the life to come, so that God may into all eternity be praised and glorified by his saints.

All the different parts of this definition are in accordance with the teachings of Scripture as shown below.

It includes the eternal indwelling of God in his people, through the Holy Spirit:

John 14:16, 17, 23 I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; <sup>17</sup>that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you. <sup>23</sup>Jesus answered and said

to him, if anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him.

It will include the knowledge of God:

John 17:3 This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.

It will embrace perfect righteousness for those that shall obtain it:

Luke 20:36 for they cannot even die anymore, because they are like angels, and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection.

There will be joy and delight in God: *"...I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy."* (John 16:22)

There will also be an abundance of good things and beauty, for *"God may be all in all"* (1Cor 15:28)

and *"...the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp."* (Rev 21:22 – 23)

The good things we enjoy now are in part only and will be perfected *"...when perfection comes, [because then] the imperfect disappears."* (1Cor 13:10)

It will, finally, be without any interruption or end. *"He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."* (Rev 21:4) *"...He will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end."* (Luke 1:33)

*"Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be handed over to the saints, the people of the Most High. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey him."* (Dan 7:27)

Is the everlasting life of the wicked the same as that of the faithful? No, it is not. Eternal life is not merely a state of

immortality, or a continued presence of the soul in the body. It is a spiritual life, a heavenly glory and felicity, which the Holy Spirit works in the faithful by his specific operation. Although the wicked will be immortal after the resurrection, their natural life shall be no life, but eternal death. We may divide their lives into four parts...

- a) An eternal rejection of God.
- b) A want of the knowledge and grace of God.
- c) An Everlasting and unutterable torment.

Mark 9:48 where THEIR WORM DOES NOT DIE, AND THE FIRE IS NOT QUENCHED.

Matt 24:51 [he] will cut him in pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

- d) Separated by a great chasm from the living. (Luke 16:26)

From these we may understand what eternal death is, and why it is called 'eternal death'. Not because the wicked may die once and thereafter is freed from death, but because they shall die forever and experience torments that shall never have an end.