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ETERNAL LIFE

By: C. D. Cole

Romans 5:12, “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.” John 5:24, “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.”

Introduction: This physical life we now have is running down and will ultimately, and before very long, for the youngest of us, run completely down and out. This life that now animates these bodies may be compared to the mechanical toys we find in the dime stores. You pick up one of the things and wind it up and it begins to operate. If it is a car it begins to run, or a monkey it will begin to jump or climb a rope, or a doll it will begin to dance. Whatever it is you know it will not run long; it soon runs down. Now our bodies are like that. They run for only a limited time. Hebrews 9:27, *“And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:”* Some of us older people can feel our bodies running down. This is not speculation or conjecture or may-be-so, it is a fact nobody denies.

But we find the Bible talking about a life that is not like that; it is called eternal life. And if it is eternal it does not run down or play out. It is not affected by time or climate or circumstance.

What is this life; how do we get it; and how do we know we have it?

WHAT IS ETERNAL LIFE?

1. It is not eternal existence. Everybody is going to exist forever, but everybody does not have eternal life. There is going to be a resurrection both of the just

and the unjust, but one is a resurrection of life, the other a resurrection of damnation. John 5:29, *“And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.”* Acts 24:15, *“And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.”*

2. It is not something we get until we die and pass into eternity. It is a present possession of every believer. John 3:36, *“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.”*

3. It is something opposite to condemnation and wrath and punishment. John 5:24, *“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.”* John 3:16, *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”* John 3:36, *“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.”* Life before the law.

4. Jesus talking to the woman at the well. John 4:13-14, *“Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.”*

5. It is a life that is hid. Colossians 3:1-3, *“If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ*

sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.”

6. It is a faith life. I get it by faith and I know I have it by faith in God’s word. It is not a life I feel. Romans 5:1-2, *“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”*

Everlasting life is to exist forever under the favor and blessing of God. It is an eternal existence free from condition and punishment and wrath. Everlasting life means that all things work together for our good. It should guarantee freedom from worry. If God is my Father and because of his Son he has given me everlasting life, I can bring all my cares and anxieties and cast them upon Him. I have his word for it that there is safety in His Son, and every heavenly blessing in His Son.

I like to distinguish things that differ. I often meditate on the words life and death. Life is an interesting word and a coveted thing. Death is a gloomy word and something that is normally shunned. Life and death are antonyms. The terms are mutually exclusive. Nothing can be dead and alive in the same sense at the same time. The Bible uses the words in a sense in which they are not defined in human dictionaries. Man is a twofold being; he is both material and immaterial, or physical and moral. The Bible uses the word as applicable to man in both senses. According to the Bible a man may be dead morally and alive physically at the same time. Luke 9:60, *“Jesus said unto him, Let the dead*

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THE INHERITANCE OF THE SAINTS

By: C. D. Cole

I Peter 1:3-5, *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”*

Inheritance is the name of property divided by an heir from an ancestor. When property changes hands the deed is made to the person and his heirs. Much of the world's goods has been acquired through the law that what a man owns shall be left to his heirs when he is dead.

Our text speaks about heavenly property. Our Heavenly Father has a large family of children and he has provided for them an inheritance. Believers in Christ are children of God and heirs apparent to eternal millions. Peter is writing to comfort the sorrowing and discouraged children of God by telling them of their future inheritance as children of God. They had little, if any, of this world's goods, but they had titles to mansions in the sky.

INHERITANCE BY BIRTH

The title to this inheritance is by birth; a birth from above, a spiritual birth. Many things are inherited by natural and physical birth. Some children inherit thrones of kings. They become kings, not by virtue of wisdom and fitness, but because they are the firstborn of kings. Some children inherit great wealth. We often hear of millionaire babies, babies born to a millionaire. Some children inherit sour and ugly dispositions from parents while others have a sweet and sunny disposition handed down to them by birth. Some inherit terrible disease. And all of us, every man without exception, has inherited sin and its curse. We are all by nature children of wrath. The first birth gives us nothing in which to glory. For eternal blessings, every person must be born again.

By this second birth we become children of God, and if children, then heirs of God. This birth from above makes us heirs to a better home in the heavenly country. It gives us a title to the inheritance described by Peter as incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, an inheritance reserved for us in heaven. The first or physical birth does not give any title to eternal blessings. To be born only once will mean to die twice: first, physical death and then the second death called the lake of fire. To be born twice will mean that we will have to die only once and maybe not at all; for some of the saints will be alive when the Lord comes and will be changed in a moment, conformed to His image, without the ordeal of death.

ASSURANCE OF INHERITANCE

The assurance of this inheritance; this is certain about receiving this inheritance and is called a lively or living hope. This living hope suggests several thoughts:

1. It means that the inheritance is not yet possessed. We never hope for what we already have; hope is always concerned about the future. Christ's hope is the well-founded expectation of future good. Hope is the grace of the soul that looks forward to the time when that which is promised in Christ shall be received. Faith believes God concerning what he has promised and hope expects to obtain it. Children of the rich, while minors, do not come into possession of their inheritance, but look forward to the time when they will possess it. So it is with the heirs of God. They have only the earnest? or first fruits of the inheritance, while the greater part of it is laid up for them in heaven. While living in their fleshly minority, their inheritance is reserved for them in heaven.

“O land of rest, for thee I sigh!

When will the moment come

When I shall lay my armour by,

And dwell in peace at home?”

2. The living hope means that the

inheritance is certain to be received. Hebrews 6:19, this hope is *“...an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast,...”* Many hopes are flimsy things, swept away as if spun on webs. Many hopes are never realized. Almost every person hopes to prosper financially, to live in comfort and independence in his old age. But insurance companies tell us that the vast majority become dependent in their old age, upon their children, upon assisted living, upon nursing homes. Hopes of parents concerning their children are so often swallowed up in sorrow. Pastors suffer crushed hope they entertained concerning their members. This world is a vast cemetery of dead and buried hopes of men and women. There are so many things that can happen to earthly inheritances and bring death to hopes. The child of the rich cannot be certain that the father will not lose his wealth before he dies. Children of kings have not always sat on their father's throne. The father may be deposed or abdicated. But in glorious contrast the child of God will realize his hope of the heavenly inheritance.

3. The living hope is not forfeited by physical death. All worldly hopes come to an end at death. The hope for houses and land and bonds, for fame and worldly honor expires with the drawing of the last breath. Death routes all hopes that are not in Christ, but it becomes the means of reaching the heavenly inheritance. Proverbs 11:7, *“When a wicked man dieth, his expectation shall perish: and the hope of unjust men perisheth.”* Proverbs 14:32, *“The wicked is driven away in his wickedness: but the righteous hath hope in his death.”*

4. The living hope of the believer is based upon the resurrection from the dead. The death of Christ apart from His resurrection gives no hope. Faith in a dead Christ would be a vain faith. I Peter 1:3, God *“...hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,”* Our hope is wound up in His work of redemption and His resurrection is

proof of an effective redemption. Romans 4:25, *“Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.”* Christ said, *“because I live ye shall live also.”*

MERCY OF GOD

The ground of this living hope is the mercy of God. I Peter 1:3, *“...according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope...”* Merit has no place in an inheritance. Merit is associated with purchases and prizes. The mercy of the Creator and not merit of the sinner is the cause of the second birth. Titus 3:5, *“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;”* We did nothing to bring about our spiritual birth, just as we did nothing to bring about our fleshly birth. We can see evidence of the spiritual birth in the believer, but nothing in the sinner to produce the new birth. John 1:12-13, *“But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”* James 1:18, *“Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.”* I John 5:1, *“Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.”*

QUALITIES OF THE INHERITANCE

I Peter 1:4, *“To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away,...”* The inheritance described in its qualities. There are three words used by Peter to describe its excellent qualities:

1. It is incorruptible. This means that there is nothing in the nature of the inheritance that can be corrupted. Figuratively speaking, it is pure gold without dross. But actually it is not material but spiritual. It is not composed of such corruptible things as silver and gold, but of knowledge and holiness. It is not “meat and drink,” it is not costly and splendid apparel, it is not in stately buildings and extensive

estates here on earth. It is joy and peace and happiness flowing from the inexhaustible fountain of Divine love. It is conforming to the Divine image. It is fellowship with the Lord in the full manifestation of all His personal glory.

2. The word undefiled means that there is nothing outside that can come in an spoil the inheritance. In the beginning paradise was all good and lovely, but Satan wormed his way into it and caused man to be turned out of the inheritance. But into that heavenly land there will be nothing to enter in that defileth. Satan and all his followers will have their portion in the lake of fire. Another has said that in heaven there will be holiness without any mixture of sin; knowledge without any mixture of error; love without any mixture of hatred; there the highest positions will cite no pride; the richest possessions will create no covetousness. If one may be personal the sweetest thing to the speaker is that in heaven there will be no sinful characteristics that now dwell in the flesh; no malice, no envy, no pride, no vengeance, no murmurings, no impatience, in short, nothing that can be called selfishness. There we will never see sin in others or feel it in ourselves.

3. The word unfading means that the inheritance will never fail to satisfy. How soon we tire of things of earth. The man who loves silver cannot be satisfied with silver; those who have the most are often the most miserable. Those who travel and see the wonders of the world do not find real satisfaction, Ecclesiastes 1:8, *“...the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing.”* The sweetest earthly music will satiate but not satisfy. But the song of heaven, though forever the same, will never tire us. David said in Psalm 17:15, *“...I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.”* And being in His likeness we will be satisfied with Him and what He provides.

INHERITANCE RESERVED

I Peter 1:4-5, this inheritance is *“...reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith...”* The inheritance is as secure as it is precious. The heirs of God shall not be cheated out of their inheritance.

How ridiculous to think that an heir of God might be cast into the lake of fire! The word for kept is a military term and means that the born again one is being guarded. This reminds us that the assaults of Satan will continue to the end of our earthly pilgrimage. The power that guards us is the power of God. We first believed according to the working of His mighty power and we shall be sustained in faith by that same power. Satan who could not keep us from believing will never be able to stop us from believing. By his assaults he may hurt us but he cannot destroy us, for he shall never rob us of our faith in Christ.

I Peter 1:5, *“...unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”* Peter uses the word salvation in the sense of glorification, its fullest and complete sense. We are kept in faith unto glorification; the salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. Justification is deliverance from the guilt of sin; glorification is deliverance from the nature and presence of sin. Justification is salvation for us; glorification is salvation in us. Justification is the work of faith; glorification is the reward of faith. It is the work of faith to believe what we can not see; it is the reward of faith to see what we have believed. Paul thinks of glorification in Romans 13:11, *“...for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.”* Romans 8:18, *“For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”* It is the salvation John speaks about in I John 3:2, *“Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.”*

This beloved is the salvation for which we pray and long for and wait. The time is coming when we shall be what we now want to be, when we shall be where we want to be.

*“There is a land of pure delight,
Where Saints immortal reign;
Eternal day excludes the night,
And pleasures banish pain.
There everlasting spring abides,
And never fading flowers;
Death like a narrow sea,
Divides that heavenly land from ours.”*

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bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God." John 5:40, "And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." John 10:10, "The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." Ephesians 2:1, "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;"

Our bodies are mortal, they are dying bodies, but this does not mean they cease to exist, for then there could be no resurrection. John 5:28-29, "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 damnation." Acts 24:15, "And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust."

So life and death are not antonyms of existence and non-existence but of conditions of existence. Those who teach a conditional immortality, teach that only the saved will exist forever, the rest will be annihilated. But immortality is not merely eternal existence for the body, but a blessed state of existence. I Corinthians 15:53, "For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality." This body must put on a blessed condition of existence. The lost will be resurrected but not glorified.

The Bible never uses the words mortal and immortality of the soul, but always of the body. This is because the body, being material, can have its substance or nature changed, while the soul, being immaterial or pure spirit, is not subject to change in its nature. Matthew 10:28, "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." This passage indicates that the soul is not

subject to the same change that the body is. The substance of the soul cannot be changed, but its well-being can be destroyed.

A man once offered a reward for a verse of scripture that speaks of the immortality of the soul. We could counter by offering a reward for one that speaks of the mortality of the soul, for there is none. Such words do not apply to that which is immaterial. The substance or nature of the soul cannot be changed, but its condition of existence can and will be changed. It can be destroyed in hell or blessed in heaven. And whatever fate comes to the soul will be shared by the body. Matthew 10:28, "...but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."

ANOTHER DISTINCTION

Life and death are used of man morally in a double sense: objectively and subjectively. The lost man is dead both objectively and subjectively. Objective death means that he is under the sentence of death; death in the sense of condemnation. This is the first death and the execution of the sentence is the second death, or existence in the place of punishment, the lake of fire. Have you noticed that the Bible speaks of a second death (which implies a first) but never of a third? There is one death for man physically. Hebrews 9:27, "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:" But morally there are two deaths. All men as sinners are dead morally, for the sentence has passed upon all men through Adam. But for believers the second death will have no power over them. Both saved and lost will experience one physical death, but those born again will not experience the second death. The sentence will not be executed against them because it has been executed upon Christ, their surety and substitute. And so, after all, our meditation leads to Christ and calls for our love and praise. John 5:24, "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." John 3:36, "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." Romans 8:1, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

There is another aspect of moral death which is depravity or defilement of nature. This is subjective in which there is no activity towards God and holiness. The death of Christ takes care of this also, but through the regenerating and sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit.

We trust what Christ did on the cross to save us from the penalty and punishment of our sin and we trust Him to deliver us from the defilement of sin by the work of the Holy Spirit.

There is still sin in us but no sin on us. On the cross there was sin on Christ but no sin in Him. Our guilt was imputed to Him, but our sinful nature was not imparted to Him. Therefore you must trust him to love you.

Added by Pastor Gormley:

You must have repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. What Jesus did to save sinners is declared in I Corinthians in the gospel or good news. I Corinthians 15:1-4, "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:"

Therefore, you must repent of your sins and trust Jesus that he did what he did on the cross for you. It is a personal thing. God commands all men everywhere to repent, therefore, all people need Jesus. Acts 17:30, God "...commandeth all men every where to repent:"

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