

THE GIFT



The Gift: It's a crazy world out there. Things are changing faster than we can keep up. It's like the whole human race is being swept along by a raging river toward an ominous Waterfall. All the politicians, and all the business tycoons are bobbing up and down in the swirling water, clinging to tree trunks and wooden crates, anything they can get their hands on. Here comes Vladimir Putin, holding on to a log with great confidence. He thinks he owns the river. And over there is Donald Trump, kept afloat by a huge file envelope---his real estate holdings. And here comes Kim Jong Un, scowling at the world with his arms around an H-bomb. All humanity is racing toward the Waterfall. All the religious leaders, and the generals, and the scientists are swept along faster and faster.

And no one has a clue about what lies ahead.



That raging river is going exactly where Jesus said it would, when he sat on the Mount of Olives and explained to his disciples how things would unfold at the end of the age.

And then many will fall away, and betray one another, and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray.

And because wickedness is multiplied, most people's love will grow cold. But whoever endures to the end will be saved.

Matthew 24:10-14

So where do we fit in this picture? The truth is, we are being swept along by that river too. What will happen to us when we get to the Waterfall? What will happen if we die before we reach the Waterfall?

The name of the river is Time. We're all being swept along in the flow of Time whether we like it or not. There is no way we can escape, as long as we are in these bodies.

Time



Now if we take a closer look at the river, we discover that not everybody is as helpless as Vladimir Putin or Donald Trump or Kim Jong Un.

There are people moving along with the current who aren't clinging to anything to hold them up. They seem to be floating along with ease. These people seem to know all about the Waterfall, and they're not afraid. But who are they? And what is it that keeps them afloat?

For all their earthly problems and troubles, these people are floating along with ease because they have Eternity inside them.

Eternity within them keeps them from sinking in the river of Time.

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand.

John 10:27-28

Eternal life. The people who are floating in the river without any visible support have eternal life inside them. They have God inside them in a way that all the others in the river do not. They know God in a way that all the others in the river do not. They have eternal life.

But what does it mean to say they have eternal life?

Eternal life, what is it?

ETERNAL LIFE IS TO KNOW GOD

Eternal life is simply being able to *know God*.

To truly know God.

*He gives eternal life to each one you have given him.
And this is the way to have eternal life—to know you,
the only true God, and Jesus Christ, the one you sent to earth.*

John 17:3

If we know God,
we have eternal life.

If we know Jesus the Messiah,
we have *eternity burning like a fire within us*.

ETERNAL LIFE IS TO HAVE GOD LIVING INSIDE YOU

Eternal life is to have God *actually living* inside you...
to the point where he *rules your life*.

“I am crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.”

Galatians 2

“Christ who lives in me”...

If Christ lives in you,

God lives in you.

The Spirit of God lives in you.

No wonder you don't sink in the river!

You have Christ in you, the hope of glory!



ETERNAL LIFE IS TO THINK WITH THE MIND OF CHRIST

Eternal life is to think with the mind of Christ.

To have his mind, which is the mind of *a servant*.

*Have this mind among yourselves,
which is yours in Christ Jesus,
who, though he was in the form of God,
did not count equality with God
a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself,
taking the form of a servant.*

Philippians 2

The mind of Christ is the mind of a servant.

He didn't come to be served.

He didn't come to be a big shot.

He came to serve his Father

and you and me down to his last drop of blood.

When we think with his mind, we no longer wear that phony mask and exalt ourselves. We just roll up our sleeves and serve wherever God puts us.

ETERNAL LIFE IS DOING THE FATHER'S WILL

And finally, eternal life is simply doing the Father's will. There are multitudes of people out there who are convinced they are among the elect. These people are certain that they possess eternal life. What a shock awaits them on the final day!

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he/she who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.” “On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you evildoers!’“

Matthew 7

To have eternal life is to do the Father's will.

And the Father's will is very simple.

It's love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength, and our neighbor as ourselves.

All Jesus' teachings, all his parables show us how to do that. Jesus's very words give us the power to do the Father's will.

So the people floating along in the river without any visible support are kept afloat because they have eternal life inside them.

They know God.

God lives inside them.

They think with the mind of Christ, the mind of a servant.

They do the Father's will.

But how did these people get that way?

How did they get to know God, to have God living inside them?

It came to them as a gift.

It comes to us as a gift.

Anybody who wants it can have this gift.

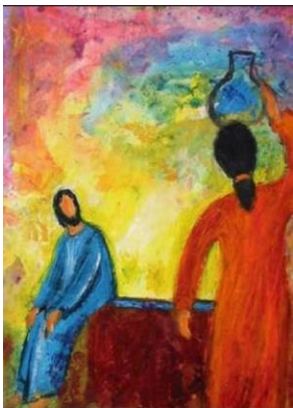


Here is a Samaritan woman who has been married five times, and is presently living with a man who is not her husband. She comes to the village well to get water and sees this Jewish man sitting there all by himself.

“Give me a drink,” says the Jewish man.

“Wait a minute!

How is that you, a Jew ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?” “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who is asking you for a drink, you would ask him, and he would give you living water.” “Now how are you going to do that? You don't have anything to draw water with. Are you greater than our father, Jacob, who drank from this well?”



“Believe me, Woman, whoever drinks water from this well is going to get thirsty again. But whoever drinks the water that I give, will never thirst. The water that I give, will become a spring inside them, welling up to eternal life.”

“Sir, give me that water!”

“Go call your husband and come back.”

“I don't have a husband.”

“True. You have had five husbands, and the man you're with now is not your husband.”
Married five times. Living with a guy who is not her husband.

Is this woman worthy to receive the gift of eternal life?

Her past doesn't bother Jesus.

By the time he's finished talking with her, this woman is floating down the river, filled with eternal life.

She knows God.

She has God living inside her.

She's starting to think with the mind of Christ, the mind of a servant.

She's starting to do the Father's will.

So what did this woman do to get this gift?

All she did was *open her heart.*

*“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them and they follow me,
and I give them eternal life.”*

“I give them eternal life...”

It's a gift, for the woman, for you, for me.

The woman leaves her water jar at the well and hurries back to the village and says, “Come see a man who told me all I ever did! Can this be the Messiah?” The villagers, who always looked down on this woman because her life was a mess, are stunned. She's totally changed.

They can see it. They can hear it in her voice.

This woman didn't have to prove herself to get eternal life. She didn't have to wait till after she died to get eternal life.

She has it right now. She has received it as a gift.

Instead of turning their backs and walking away from her, like they always did, the villagers gather around the woman and follow her back to the well.

Pretty soon she has company floating down the river with her. They have God living inside them.

*“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them and they follow me,
and I give them eternal life.”*

To have God living within us, is a gift.

All we have to do is receive it like that woman did.

We open our hearts and say, “Lord, give me that living water!”

And when God begins to fill the emptiness inside us with his mercy, all we have to do is live that mercy toward each other and toward all people. And now, from within, the Lord Jesus starts teaching us...

how to forgive
how to get over ourselves
how to wash feet
how to pray.



But here's the part many people forget. Eternal life is not a gift we receive once and done. *It's a gift we receive every day*, like the air we breathe, like the water we drink.

We receive God into our lives daily. We take up our cross daily and follow Jesus. And we just keep on floating down the river, serving God wherever he puts us.

So we need to ask ourselves daily,

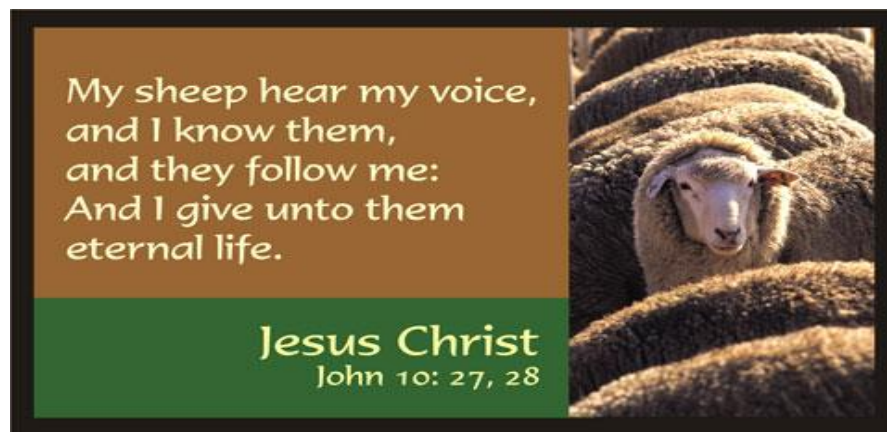
Do I know God?

Is God living inside me?

Am I thinking with the mind of Christ, the mind of a servant?

Am I doing the Father's will?

Eternal life is ours afresh today if we but open our hearts.



THE LAMB
WHO WAS SLAIN
HAS BEGUN HIS REIGN

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39039 Shoreline Mt. Clemens MI 48045

Art: Berna Lopez