

Born to Live Forever



The following notes contain some of the material presented in the series "Is God for Real?"

From the very beginning of creation God intended mankind to live forever. So, if you have ever felt dissatisfied with the relatively few years we get to live on planet earth, it is not surprising! The Bible teaches us that God has put eternity into our hearts (Ecclesiastes 3:11), and wants us to long for eternal life, which only He can deliver.

It is said there are only two things certain in life, death and taxes. We don't like to think about it, but we all know that every day we are alive is one day closer to our inevitable death, and death is no respecter of persons. Romans 6:23 tells us that 'the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus.' Romans also teaches that all of us have sinned, or rebelled against God (Romans 3:23), and are all thus subject to death. The gospel is the good news that Christ died in our place for our sins, and offers us eternal life instead. We will ultimately experience this reality at the Resurrection at the Second Coming of Christ.

Many have felt that they are unworthy of eternal life, and may even feel that they are beyond God's forgiveness, however the Bible reveals that Christ is able to save to the uttermost all those that come to Him (Hebrews 7:25), that He came into the world to save sinners (1 Timothy 1:15), and that anyone who comes to Him, He will by no means cast out (John 6:37). Furthermore, in John 3:16 Jesus says, "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." In this verse, 'whoever' refers to anyone who will respond to God's offer of salvation through Jesus Christ.

In the time of Jesus, the religious leaders, called the Pharisees, criticised Jesus for spending time with sinners. Jesus responded by comparing sin with an illness and teaching them that He as a great physician had come to treat the condition. The best thing for us as sinners to do is admit we have a problem and allow Jesus to deal with it. If someone with a terminal illness denies that they even have the illness, there is little that can be done to help them.

So why does God hate sin so much? There are a number of reasons. God loves us as His children, and sin hurts His children, therefore God hates sin. Secondly, sin separates us from God (Isaiah 59:2). God desires to be close to us in order to develop and enjoy a deep meaningful relationship with each one of us. Jesus came into the world to bridge the gap between God and us, between heaven and earth. This is illustrated in the Bible by Jacob's ladder. In Genesis 28:12, Jacob has a dream about a ladder extending from earth to heaven. Jesus referred to this in John 1:51, identifying Himself as this ladder, thus connecting earth and heaven, connecting God with His children.

Romans 6:23 describes eternal life as a gift of God. It is freely given. We don't deserve it, we cannot earn it and we cannot buy it. God offers salvation to us freely as His gracious gift. Notice what Ephesians 2:8-9 says, "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast". God intends that all of us should accept that gift, and it is not His will that any should be lost (2 Peter 3:9). God has done, is doing, and will do everything He possibly can to give full and free salvation to every human being. However, there is something that even God Himself cannot do. He

cannot choose for us. We must accept Him by our own free will because God will not force us to be saved. We must choose.

God's plans and thoughts toward us are good and not evil, as some still think today (Jeremiah 29:11). He demonstrated His love to us by dying for our sins at a time when we were in rebellion against Him (Romans 5:8). In fact when Jesus was hanging on the cross His thoughts were not for Himself, but rather he was concerned for those who were putting Him to death. He said, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). Finally, as He died He cried out, "My God, My God, Why have you forsaken me" (Matthew 27:46). Jesus was being separated from the Father for the first time in all eternity. He took our punishment. He took our place. When Jesus died He was crucified between two thieves who were also crucified on crosses either side of Him. Both were guilty, both initially mocked Jesus, and yet, at the end one of them finally accepted Christ as Lord (Luke 23:39-43). In a way, those two thieves represent all humanity. All have sinned, all are sentenced to death, but some will accept Christ and ultimately receive everlasting life, others will not and will pay the price of sin for themselves. God offers us a way out of our dilemma by offering to take our place.

In Acts 16:30 the question is asked, "What must I do to be saved?" The reply given is, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved." But what does it mean to 'believe in Jesus?' Do I merely have to believe He exists? Many believe he existed, but do not put their trust in Him. God wants us to trust Him in this life, and in His promise of the life to come. The Bible teaches us to "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths" (Proverbs 3:5-6). When it comes to having the hope of eternity, trusting in Jesus means everything. With Him we have hope; without Him we have none. As John put it in his letter to the church, "God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. 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" (1John 5:11-13).

God intended for us to live forever, but then we separated ourselves from God, the only source of everlasting life. In spite of sin and death, God will ultimately accomplish His plan for all those who choose to put their hope and trust in Him. Let us put God first in our lives. Then we can know the peace of mind which passes understanding, and can have confidence and hope for the future.

If you would like to know more about this subject, or others in the series, 'Is God for Real?' then please contact one of our staff and they will be happy to help you.