

“SAVED IN HIS LIFE”

THE PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE OF ETERNAL LIFE IN ROMANS 5—8

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In the preceding articles of this issue, we have presented eternal life in a primarily objective way. We have seen that this eternal life is nothing less than the very divine life of God Himself. And we have seen that in His infinite mercy and for His eternal purpose God has given this very life to human beings, bringing them forth in this life as His genuine children. We have seen, further, that there is a line of life running through the entire Bible, from the tree of life in the garden of Eden to the city of life, the New Jerusalem. And we have seen the development of this life in the believers, from their regeneration to their glorification in God’s complete salvation. We hope that this understanding of eternal life is as astounding to our readers as it has been to us for many years. (Indeed, we have been freshly astounded as we have worked on these articles!)

But what does all of this mean for our practical Christian life? And what does it mean for our practical church life, our participation in the life of the church? We dedicate this and the next article to these more subjective questions. For we wholeheartedly believe that the revelation of the eternal life has everything to do with our individual Christian life and with our corporate church life. We hope that what we have presented in the preceding articles does more than tickle the intellect with a new thought regarding eternal life. This new thought, astounding though it is in itself, requires a rethinking of the whole Christian life in both its individual and corporate dimensions. The genuine Christian life, we propose, is nothing less than a living out of the eternal life we have received. And because this eternal life is in Christ (Rom. 6:23), the genuine Christian life is nothing less than a living in Christ and a living out of Christ.

The Christian Life as a Living in Christ

As those who have received the eternal life of God

Himself, the believers should live not by their fallen human life but by the divine life they have received. The gift of eternal life, in other words, should not remain as a dormant possession within the believers. The eternal life of God is full of divine vitality and organic operation. It has the organic power to transform the believers’ whole being and to produce in them a new kind of living, as we see in the Lord’s word in John 6:

He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood *has eternal life*...As the living Father has sent Me and I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he also *shall live* because of Me. (John 6:54, 57; emphasis added)

As those who have received the Lord Himself into our being through our faith—eating His flesh and drinking His blood—we not only have eternal life but also should live in a new way. The connection between life and living is even more striking in Greek. The Greek word underlying “life” in these verses is ζωή (*zōē*), which, as we pointed out in the first article of this issue, often refers in the New Testament to the very life of God Himself imparted into the believers to make them genuine children, sons, and heirs of God. The related Greek verb underlying “live” in these verses is ζάω (*zaō*), which often refers in the New Testament to a new, transcendent mode of living in accordance with this new, divine, and eternal life of God (Bauer et al., s.v. “ζάω”). When the Lord says, “I live because of the Father,” surely He is not merely saying that He is alive because of the Father; rather, He is saying that His whole mode of living flows forth from the eternal life that He continually receives by being eternally begotten of the “living Father.” In the same way, when the Lord says, “He who eats Me, he also shall live because of Me,” surely He is not merely saying that the believers are alive because of Him, having received eternal life from Him; rather, He is saying that the believers should have an entirely new mode of living that flows forth from the eternal life they have received. “Just as the Father