

No end!

2 Corinthians 4:13-18

April 12, 2009

*You promise to all who trust you
forgiveness of sins and fullness of grace,
courage in the struggle for justice and peace,
your presence in trial and rejoicing,
and eternal life in your realm which has no end.*

You promise to all who trust you ... eternal life.

So what do you think about that? Let's talk about it. Let's talk about eternal life!

I'm guessing that many of you, if asked what you expect the promise or reward of your faith will be, you would answer: "eternal life." Or, "going to heaven after I die."

But I'm also guessing that at any other time, in any other place, in the everyday times and places of your life, you don't think about eternal life at all! It's a nice thought, a comforting thought, but not something that has much to do with your life as it is.

It doesn't have much to do with our lives as they are because we think of eternal life primarily in terms of life after death, and life -- after death -- has nothing to do with what we are experiencing right here and right now.

We think of eternal life as kind of a cosmic second chance, a second go round, and we comfort ourselves with the thought that death is not really what it seems to be.

Or we think of eternal life as some kind of post-death translation into some wholly other place, some wholly other realm of existence -- heaven, perhaps -- a place entirely different from and apart from this realm and this life, a place about which we know nothing at all.

But death is what it seems to be. And there is no other realm. God does not promise to take us to heaven. God promises eternal life.

Eternal life. Not just life after death, but eternal life. No throwaway life, but life that matters. Not life that flames out, but life that burns brightly. Not life that ebbs away, slowly or quickly, but life that is constantly renewed and energized. Not life that is doomed, but life that is blessed. Not life that leads to a dead end, but life that leads ... to life.

Because God raised Jesus Christ from death, the power of resurrection is at work in us and in our world ... now!

Even though our physical being is gradually decaying, yet our spiritual being is renewed day after day.

When we are joined to Christ, by faith, when we are joined to Christ, by baptism, something is happening to us ... now! We are being transformed. We are being renewed. We are being remade. We are being brought to life. We are being given a new kind of life. We are being given ... eternal life.

The world is what it seems to be: a place of turmoil and trouble, of decay and death, a place where all good things do come to an end. But in faith, by faith, we see what we otherwise could not see. We see what is otherwise invisible.

We see the world ... as God will make it, as God is making it. We see God's realm ... which has no end! And we fix our attention on that realm. We fix our attention on the things that are, as yet, unseen. Because the realm that is, as yet, unseen, and the things that are, as yet, unseen, last forever!

And so we fix our attention on those things now! We live for the sake of that realm now, as if we already lived in that realm now ... because, by the power of Christ's resurrection, we do already live in that realm now!

You don't need to wait for eternal life. Embrace it now! Live it now! Live what matters. Live what lasts. Let God renew your being, let God renew you, day after day after day as you grow up into what you one day shall be.

That's what Easter means. That's what the resurrection of Jesus means: not just an insurance policy guaranteeing life after death, but an invitation to you to live -- to live in fellowship with God; to live for the sake of God's kingdom; to live for the sake of all God's children; to live a full life, a life full of joy, a life full of promise; to live the life that is promised, eternal life -- now!

And this good thing, eternal life in God's realm, has no end!