

A Celebration of Eternal Life

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[0 : 00] All right, good morning everyone. I have a few more announcements before we get started. A few other things. So if you'll notice out on the table, out at the bulletin board, there's some new directories.

Now, you might be thinking, well, didn't we just do some new directories? Well, we did, but those were for last year. So the nice picture directories that we did, they kind of came late. I think it was like October when we finally got them out.

But those were for 2022. And we still have those, by the way, if you want some nice picture ones. But we've got, you know, new membership and, you know, maybe changes. Some people might have been added to the directory. So if you want to get the latest, they're just simple print ones. So no pictures this time, but you can get those out on the table. Let's see. So he mentioned, Roger mentioned the John 316 sign up.

Right next to that, I just put up this morning a sign-up sheet for the Clark County Fair. That's going to be in July this year. Now, we're not sure that we're going to do that.

[1 : 10] But what we need to know is how many people can we get to commit to be willing to help out with that fair. It's a whole week. And we need to man a booth for, I think, 10 or 11 hours a day for that whole week.

And so we're going to do shifts, I think three or four hours. So maybe three shifts a day. And if you would be willing to do at least one shift during that whole week, and if you would let us know by just putting your name on there.

You're not signing up for a specific day. The dates are on there. I can't remember July. Well, actually, I have it right here. July 21st through the 28th.

So if you'll be available at that time and think you'd like to come, we'll have some opportunities for some training. We'll share what we're going to be doing and what it'll be like. We'd like to have at least two people to man the booth at a time.

But you don't have to be really good at talking to people. Now, if you are, that's great because there'll be lots of opportunities to talk to people. But if you're not that great at talking to people, but you're able to smile at people and say, did you get one of these?

[2 : 26] Then you're totally qualified. So who can do that? Can anybody smile at people and say, did you get one of these? I think anybody can do that. So if you're able to do that and you're willing to help us out or to join us in this evangelism effort at the fair, then just put your name on that sheet of paper and we will submit.

If we think we have enough people, we'll submit that application to get a booth there and put that on the calendar. So let's see.

I think that's it. One more thing. So there's that Thursday morning Bible study this week. If you've never been to one of those, you've got two amazing things.

The food is incredible and the Bible teaching is amazing. And it's not going to be for me. It's going to be from Pastor Marv. So I know you heard from Pastor Marv a couple weeks ago, but if you miss him, like I do, then come to the Thursday morning.

I guess a lot of people have to work on Thursday mornings at 9 o'clock. But if you're able to make it, I think you'd really enjoy it. So I think that's it.

[3 : 43] I guess before I continue on, were there any other announcements from the congregation that we should share before we wrap up the announcements? Okay. All right.

Well, we'll jump into it. We just finished with a series on, you know, who is this man? Who do men say that I am about Christ and who he was and is today?

Today we have a special service. And it's special to me and I'm sure special to others as well. But today is a service to celebrate eternal life.

As many of you know, Carolyn Jordan passed away just a couple months ago. And Carolyn, she didn't like funerals. I don't know who does.

Does anybody like going to funerals? No, nobody likes going to funerals. And she didn't either. And so she told me and her family, or her family through me, or she told me through her family, pass this along, that she didn't want a funeral.

[4 : 50] She didn't want a memorial service. She didn't want people crying and doing all that kind of stuff. But she thought it would be neat to have a service, a regular church service, celebrating eternal life.

Because that's what she had and she gained eternal life many, many years ago. And that's what gave her hope and peace as well, you know, when it was her time to go on to the Lord.

So today, we're not going to have a memorial service, but we are going to have just a regular church service, discussing this eternal life that was so important to her and so important to all of us who believe and trust in Christ.

Learning about it and celebrating it this morning in honor of Carolyn. At the end, I do want to share a little bit about Carolyn and her testimony about how she came to have eternal life.

But we're going to start with a verse that is familiar to most of us, I think. And that's in John 3.16. In fact, we're coming up here on March 16th, which some have dubbed John 3.16 Day, because it's the third month of the year.

[6 : 09] We're going to try to use that opportunity to shine a light to the world, letting them know about that gospel. But John 3.16, as most of us have memorized, says this, For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have what?

Have everlasting life. Have everlasting life. And then it says, just the next verse, I think this is important too, For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved.

And some people might think that, right? God's going to send his Son into the world because the world is evil, the world is wicked. And so he sends a messenger, right, to condemn the world. And to be honest, that would have been probably appropriate, right?

But that's not what he did. He sent his Son into the world because he loved the world. And he wanted everyone in the world not to perish, but to have this thing we call everlasting life or eternal life.

You know, all of us, not just in this room, but across the world, we are all acutely aware of our immortality, that there's an expiration date to the life that we live on this earth.

[7 : 40] Some, you know, for many of us maybe can remember the time that we started thinking about this. Usually you grow up, and there's a certain age, and it's different for different people. But, you know, you're living life, and you don't think, and all you think about is this is what life is, and it's wonderful, and it's grand.

But then maybe you experience the death of a loved one or something like that, and you start to contemplate. Maybe it's 10 years old or 12 years old. You start to contemplate this thing called death.

But everybody, it seems to me, or most people, I think, have this desire in themselves to live forever.

Right? It's not just Christians. It's everyone across the world. And as you look at the history of the world, you see all these signs of kind of this desire, this pursuit of immortality.

We have myths and stories in the ancient world of people who have pursued immortality. There's this kind of myth of the fountain of youth, right? And you have myths about, and most people don't think that they're actually true, but Alexander the Great, they say that he pursued some kind of a fountain of youth.

[9 : 02] And then there was a conquistador, I think, Paul Stelian, that they say that pursued a fountain of youth somewhere in Florida. We have lots of books and films about people trying to find some kind of fountain of youth or something similar, pursuing some kind of immortality.

You know, even today, in our more materialistic world, where the secular world kind of thinks of, well, we're just kind of atoms and molecules, and that's it, right?

And so in that sense, you might think, well, people really don't care or think about immortality. But they do, don't they? Even though they think they're just atoms and molecules, they're still interested in living forever.

People want to live forever. Even though there's pain in the world, and everybody experiences pain to some degree, some more than others, but we all experience pain. But even with the pain that comes with life, most of us want to live forever.

So there are people today, if you have enough money, you can pay a company, and when you die, they will freeze your body in what's called a cryonic state.

[10:32] They'll freeze your body, and the whole purpose of that is for the hope that one day science will figure out immortality, how to make people and their bodies actually live forever.

So maybe science will figure out one day how to bring life, eternal life, to our mortal bodies. And so there are companies out there, and you can pay them tens of thousands of dollars, and upon your death, the physical death of your body, they'll put you in one of these tanks and frozen for however long it takes until science can figure this out.

At least that's the hope. There's also this concept today of digital immortality, where people are trying to work on solutions.

How can we connect maybe wires to your brain or something like that, and maybe we can download your brain, your consciousness, your mind, your memories, whatever it is that makes us us, and people don't know, right?

What is it that makes us us? Can we download that into a machine, into a computer, and you can live on, maybe in some kind of a digital world, or maybe later on in the future, we can upload your brain to a robot body, or something like that, and there's this whole futurist movement out there, and you can go to conferences, and they talk about these ideas, and people are excited about what the future may hold.

[12:09] There's lots of anti-aging science out there, because people are willing to pay a lot of money, right, to just extend their life, even if it's just 10 years.

And even those who have kind of given up on the idea of more of a physical immortality, it still seems that even those people want to live on in some way.

And so many people, especially if they build up riches and wealth, will try to create some kind of memorial to themselves so that their memory might live on. And why would somebody do that, right?

You're not here anymore, but you want other people to remember you. What benefit of that is to you? But there's something inside of people that wants themselves to just continue living on in some way.

So they'll build a stadium, or a building, or some kind of, give money to some kind of park, and put their name on it so that their name will live on.

[13:14] There's something in us that wants to live forever. We love life. We love our lives, anyway. We don't always love other people's lives, but we tend to love our own, and we want to live forever.

And the question is, why? Why is that? Is it because, like the evolutionists would say, that we have evolved to somehow want immortality?

I mean, what benefit is that to the evolutionary, the supposed evolutionary process of survival of the fittest, passing our genes on? I don't really see that.

The other question to ask, is this some kind of an illicit desire, you know, wanting something that we can't have? Is it a desire that's wrong for us to want to live forever?

Or is it a desire that God has put in our very being? And I think that's the case.

[14:15] God designed us to live forever. That's how he made us. In Ecclesiastes 3, verse 11, Solomon, the writer of Ecclesiastes, says this.

He mentions, just somewhat in passing, that God has put eternity in our hearts. God put eternity in our hearts.

What does that mean? Well, there's a little bit of deciphering to do there, but something inside of us, whether it's the desire or just that he made us eternal.

God made us to be eternal and to desire to live eternally. And not only that, God wants us to live forever.

You know, in Matthew, chapter 19, verse 16, there's this verse. It's the story of this man that came to Jesus and he asked a question, and it's an important question.

[15:16] It's a question that was pressing on his heart, probably a question that he'd had for his whole life. And he went to this man who was doing miracles and maybe he was the Messiah and he asked him this question.

He said, Good teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life? What is it that I can do so that I can get this eternal life, so that I can live forever?

And what was Jesus' response? And we won't necessarily read the scriptures, but was his response, Well, how dare you ask for something like that? Only God can have eternal life.

Is that how Jesus responded? No, not at all. Jesus' response, this is a good thing. This is a good thing that you should want eternal life.

So he tried to point him in the right direction. So if God designed us to have eternal life, and he did, then what happened?

[16:25] What went wrong? How come we don't have this thing that God designed us to have? And this really just goes back to Christianity 101, going back to an event in history in the very beginning that we call the fall.

When God created a man and woman and put them in a garden, and he said, I've got a few special trees in here. One's a tree of life, and here's another tree called the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

He says, if you eat of it, what would happen? You will surely die. You will surely die. Don't eat of it. Here's a tree of life, and here's a tree that produces death.

Don't eat of that one. And he gave them that choice. And we know what happened. They disobeyed. They ate of that tree, and people debate.

Well, it said that they would die, and the serpent said, well, you won't surely die. You'll be like God. But what happened? They didn't drop dead.

[17:29] They didn't just drop on the ground when they ate of that tree. So there's a debate. Well, what kind of death was he talking about? Is it physical death, or is it a spiritual kind of death?

And really, I think the answer is both. Death came, the seeds of death, we'll say, kind of entered into man as far as his physical body.

In fact, you read later on when God, he kicks them out of the garden, and he says, in fact, let's turn to it. Genesis chapter 3.

Genesis 3, chapter 22. Then the Lord God said, Behold, the man has become like one of us, to know good and evil.

And now, lest he put out his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever.

[18:39] Therefore the Lord God sent him out of the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he was taken. So he drove out the man, and he placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way to guard the way of the tree of life.

God felt like he needed to prevent man from eating of that tree that would give him, that would renew his body regularly to eternal life.

And why was that? Why would he take that away from man? Well, I think sin, you know, it's a little bit of conjecture, but I think sin coming into the equation changes things. You know, there are concerns, in fact, as I was reading about some of these things that have to do with the making us live longer, increasing the duration of our lives.

There were people who had concerns about some of these billionaires, and their concerns about them living too long. Why would people be concerned about billionaires living too long? Well, because people consider them, you know, corrupt and evil.

And well, eventually, maybe they'll just continue their corruption. And I think that is actually God's concern in the world when he did this, is that now that sin and evil has come into the world, if we put a cap on people's earthly life, that will prevent, to some degree, the proliferation of evil in the world.

[20:13] Anyway, that seems to be the reason, as far as I can tell. they didn't die right away, but I think it's important to understand that there are two aspects of our lives, or two, to really us, as human beings.

There's the physical part of us, and there's the spiritual part of us. The Bible indicates that the physical part of us is like a tent or a house that we live in. The real us, the part that is eternal, is described as our heart or our spirit, sometimes maybe even our soul.

So then, what is death? What is spiritual death and what is physical death? Physical death, or really just death in general, I think can be described simply as a separation.

Death is just a separation. When it comes to physical death, it's a separation of what? Our spirit, our inner man, from our outer man. Our spirit from our body.

So when you have physical death, you have a body left behind, but a spirit that goes on. So then, what is spiritual death? Is it to cease to exist?

[21 : 34] No, again, God designed us to live forever. forever. So, spiritual death is a separation from God.

And that's what it means to spiritually die. When Adam and Eve sinned, they were separated from God. Their sins separated them from God.

So, if our spirit really is eternal, and it is, our spirit cannot die like our body can, then, I guess that means we have eternal life, right?

Because our spirit will never die. So that means we will continue on and endure throughout eternity.

And that is true, isn't it? In fact, there are philosophers over the years, even going back to Plato, when Plato taught, and he thought, well, from just the way things are, I think I can deduce that human beings will actually live forever.

He taught that. He didn't have scripture, but he thought, I think that human beings, there is an immaterial part of human beings that will endure on through eternity.

[22 : 55] But the question is, is that enough just to endure on? Is that what we can call eternal life? We can call it eternity, but is it eternal life?

You see, enduring forever is not enough. We don't just need to endure, we want life. In Deuteronomy chapter 30, verse 19, this is part of the giving of the law of Moses.

It says this, I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing.

Therefore, choose life, that both you and your descendants may live. God was offering, here's a way of death and a way of life.

I want you to choose the way of life. Fast forward into the book of Romans written by Paul, this is after the death of Christ, in Romans chapter 6.

[24 : 12] And we'll start at verse 20, so if you go ahead, I think this is important again to look up, so Romans chapter 6. Romans chapter 6 in verse 20.

And Paul is talking about our state as really being dead in our sins. He says this in verse 20, for when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regards to righteousness.

He's talking about a time before that he's talking to Christian believers. He said, before you were slaves to sin. And then he asked this question, what fruit did you have then and the things of which you are now ashamed?

You look back and you see the kind of life that you led, the sinful life, and now you're ashamed of it. What was the fruit of all that? For the end of those things is what? It's death.

The end of those things is death. But these people are still alive. What does he mean? Not a physical death. It's a spiritual kind of death. But now, he says in verse 22, but now having been set free from sin and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness.

[25 : 36] In the end, everlasting life. And he sums it up in this. In fact, I think he sums up this whole chapter, chapter 6.

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. Sin brings about death.

And it's not a temporal death. It's an eternal death. When we look at the word eternal life, there's two parts to it. There's the length, which is eternal, and then there's the quality.

Life is the quality that we want. So there's eternal life, and the opposite of that is not to cease to exist, but eternal death. The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

When we trust in Christ as believers, because he was talking to believers here, he's talking about what they have as believers now. You have eternal life now.

[26 : 49] But there's also an eternal life that we will get in the future. There's an eternal life that we have now, and one that we get later.

And I'm going to go through a few verses that speak to that. In Romans, if you just turn over a couple chapters, Romans chapter eight. Romans chapter eight. Romans chapter eight.

chapter eight, he kind of gets to the big inflection point.

And, well, we are lost in our sins. He talks in chapters five, six, and seven. We're lost in our sins, and what do we do? He ends chapter seven saying, well, I try to not sin anymore, but then I find myself doing the things that I don't want to do.

Who will save me from this body of death, he calls it. Then he says, now there is no condemnation. This is Romans chapter eight, verse one.

[27 : 54] There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the spirit. For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free.

from the law of sin and death. Jesus Christ did something in me, so that there was that spirit of death, that law of death, the law that says he who sins must die, and I have been set free from that law, and I have been given new life.

Further on, we'll skip a few verses to look at verse 10, and he says this, if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the spirit is life because of righteousness.

So our bodies, they still carry this seed of death in them, but our spirit is alive to God. Our spirit is alive to God.

That separation that was there is no longer there. We've been united with him, and so our spirit is alive. And then he talks, and he mentions in the next verse about something else.

[29 : 12] He talks about what we have now, but in verse 11 he talks about what we will have in the future. He says this, but if the spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, and does the spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwell in us?

He does. He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his spirit who dwells in you.

That same spirit that gives life to your spirit, that gives you eternal life now, that same spirit will raise up our bodies, our physical bodies, in the future to be with the Lord forever, to have life, not just a spiritual life, but also a physical life in the future.

That is something that is to come. A few verses down, he speaks of this a little bit further, verse 23, not only that, but we also who have the first fruits of the spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our bodies.

we have eternal life now. Our spirits are united with God if we trust in Christ, but there's still that seed of death that remains in our body, but not forever.

[30 : 42] One day our bodies too will be redeemed, and the way he describes it is so vivid, isn't it? We groan, we groan within ourselves.

we're looking forward to that day that even our bodies will be raised just as his body was raised.

There's another verse, and you don't necessarily need to turn there, but this is 2 Corinthians chapter 4, verse 16.

Paul's trying to encourage the Corinthians, and he says this, therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day.

Our outward man is perishing. It's getting older, it's decaying, it's corrupting, to use the biblical word, not corrupting in a moral sense, but it's just decaying.

But our inward man is being renewed day by day. The life of God in us is renewing our inner man every day. But we still have that problem of the outer man that is perishing or decaying.

[31 : 54] Then Paul, we're going to go ahead and turn to 2 Corinthians chapter 5, which I guess is the next chapter. So we're going to read this passage where Paul really gets into some details here.

2 Corinthians chapter 5. He's trying to give encouragement to these Corinthians who might be going through some level of persecution and difficulties in their life.

In fact, in chapter 4, verse 8, he says, we are hard pressed on every side, yet not crushed, we're perplexed, but not in despair, persecuted, but not forsaken, struck down, but not destroyed. So he's talking about going through difficulties in your life, and he's trying to give encouragement through spiritual truth.

When you get down to chapter 5, he says this, verse 1, God is preparing for us new bodies.

For in this we groan, he uses that same language again, for in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation, which is from heaven. that's what we want. We have these bodies that are perishing now, but we're groaning within ourselves to get the new ones that God is preparing for us.

[33 : 25] If indeed we have been clothed, we shall not be found naked. For we who are in this tent, we groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed.

clothed. It's not that we just want to shed these bodies that are decaying, but actually further clothed. We want to put on something even better.

That's what we all want, isn't it? That mortality may be swallowed up by life, because we are experiencing death day by day by day in our bodies.

We have the spirit of life in us. Renewing us day by day. We are united with him as believers who trust in Christ. But our bodies are continuing to experience that death.

Then in verse 5, he says this, Now he who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the spirit as a guarantee. That spirit that lives in us as believers, who is giving life to our spirit, is also the guarantee.

[34 : 36] money. That word is, it means like a down payment, or earnest money. If you've ever gone to buy a house and maybe you're competing with other people to buy the house, more than one family wants to buy this house, they say, well, tell you what, I'll keep your name down, I'll make sure nobody else buys it if you just give me some earnest money.

So give me a few thousand dollars to show that you're really truly interested, you're really going to do it, and I won't give it to anyone else. And that's how the Holy Spirit is described here.

He is the earnest money that God gave us to say, hey, I'm going to give you the beginnings of this eternal life through the Holy Spirit. But I'm not finished.

You don't have the whole thing yet. But here's the down payment, and the Holy Spirit himself is the down payment. so that you know that there's a guarantee that in the future you're going to get the whole thing.

He gave us the Spirit as a guarantee, verse 5. Verse 6, so we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body, we're absent from the Lord.

[35 : 46] For we walk by faith, not by sight. We are confident, yes, well-pleased, rather, to be absent from the body. Sorry, we are confident, yes, well-pleased, rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.

So when we leave this body, we're present with the Lord, and eventually one day, at the time of resurrection, we'll receive those new bodies. Just one other verse on this topic, Colossians chapter 3, Colossians chapter 3.

And I like what this says. I like the way that Paul phrases this. We'll just start in verse 1, chapter 3, verse 1, Colossians 3, 1.

If then you are raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things that are above, not on things that are on the earth.

So he's saying, hey, this is how I want you to live your earthly life. Don't just have your whole focus on earthly things, but have your focus on heavenly things. And here he's giving the reason why, in verse 3.

[37 : 05] For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. And when Christ, who is our life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

So, this is a different kind of death. When he says that we died, this is a different kind of death, one that Paul speaks of as a death to sin or a death to the law.

So we have death because of our sins, but ultimately, we need to die a different kind of death in order to be given new life. And that's the kind of, that's what Paul's talking about here.

Therefore, for you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. So our life is hidden with Christ. We have life that is where?

It's in him. So the next big question, which is kind of really the overarching question, this eternal life that God offers, that he designed us to have, but we broke, the world broke, and we lost it.

[38 : 18] He offers it back again. How is it that we can have this eternal life that God wants us to have? We go back to John 3.16.

For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. The first thing to know is that there's only one way to have that eternal life.

It's not something that God just gives to everybody without, without any kind of discretion or discrimination, or I guess I shouldn't put it that way.

It's not that God gives to everyone automatically. He offered a gift to those who are willing, and it's through that gift that you can have eternal life.

It's not through some other gods. It's not through science. It's not through mythology. The other thing that's important to know is it's not through trying to earn that eternal life, but it's through a person.

[39 : 31] That person is Jesus Christ. So eternal life is through a person, one called Jesus Christ. And then Ephesians 2 really gets down to the nitty-gritty.

Ephesians chapter 2, again, sums up kind of this whole thing. And we're going to read through about seven, or actually nine verses here.

Paul's explaining how we move from death to life. He starts out, verse 1. Ephesians chapter 2, verse 1.

And you he made alive who were dead in your trespasses and sins. He starts summarizing the whole thing. You were dead in your sins.

Your sins brought about your death, your separation from God. But God made you alive. He talks about your sins, the sins that you once walked in according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of the flesh.

[40 : 53] It wasn't just you Ephesians. He said it was all of us. And I think maybe he's even, he's talking about himself as a Jew. It wasn't just you Gentiles. It was us Jews as well.

We walked fulfilling the desires of the flesh. Fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as others.

So we were all under God's wrath. Why? Because of our sins. We brought death on ourselves through our own sins. But, what a great word, but here's the pivotal point.

Here's the inflection point. But God, who is rich in mercy because of his great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, he made us alive together with Christ.

for by grace you have been saved. So he's telling them what happened to you. You were raised with Christ. You were made alive together with Christ.

[42 : 00] And raised us up together and made us to sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace and his kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

And then here's the crux. Here's the how. For by grace you have been saved through faith. And that not of yourselves. It's the gift of God.

It's a gift. God offers a gift. And that gift is a person, Jesus Christ, who did something. He accomplished something for us. He gave us a gift by shedding his blood on a cross.

For it's by grace. Grace just means a gift. For it's by a gift that you have been saved through your faith. Just by believing. Just by trusting him. And that not of yourselves.

It is the gift of God. And then just to bring home the point that it's a gift. He brings the counterpoint.

[43 : 06] It's the counterpoint. Not of works, lest anyone should boast. Because really for a long time, that was, if we go back to what was said in Deuteronomy, God says, here's death and here's life.

Choose you this day. And what was at hand here? It was this thing called the law. Do these things. Do these things. Do these things and live. Was what the law said.

And so, that's what a lot of people do today, right? What must I do to inherit eternal life? That's where so many people are at.

What can I do? I need to do something to get that eternal life. What is it that I have to do? Some people are desperate. Do I have to do some kind of religious ritual?

Do I have to just try to be better? Do I have to try to stop these bad habits that I have? Paul says here, Ephesians chapter 2, 8 and 9, it's just a gift.

[44 : 15] You don't have to do anything. Just trust. Trust in the gift of God. It's not of works. It's not of anything that you can do. God doesn't want you to boast.

He's going to take away your boasting. So with that, I want to just tell a little bit about Carolyn's story. I talked to Tanya and Pastor Marv and Betty over the weekend just to kind of get some of the details.

Carolyn grew up in a religious household. She grew up Catholic. Went to Catholic school. Very involved in church.

Very devout in her faith. Doing all the things that she was supposed to do that you're supposed to do as part of being part of the Catholic Church. But one of the things that she experienced, and Betty talked to me about this, both of them experienced, was just the heavy weight of both sin and the requirements to try to make your way to God.

To try to be good enough. And there's a lot of fear in that. Can I be good enough? Not wanting to miss a Mass.

[45 : 41] Not wanting to forget. Is there any sins that I forgot in going to confession? What happens if I forget one of them? Carolyn had a back injury.

And it caused her to spend a lot of time, I guess, in bed or trying to heal. And she spent that time reading the scriptures. Now I'm going to say, reading the Bible is dangerous.

If you read the Bible too much, danger, danger, but in a good way. Right? Reading the Bible is dangerous when it comes to religion and false ideas.

She found some things in the scriptures that just didn't fit in with the teachings that she had heard growing up and in the church that she was a part of. And her and her friend Betty, both had these same questions at the same time and took their questions to the priest, or to a priest that they knew. And he really wasn't able to answer their questions, these discrepancies between what the Bible says and what I'm hearing the Catholic Church teach.

[47 : 01] I guess one of his responses was, well, you actually make a pretty good point. But I'm too invested in this thing, so this is what my life is.

It's part of the Catholic Church. But I guess she decided, with her friend Betty, that they weren't too invested.

They wanted to be invested in what does the Bible say? What do the scriptures say? What does God's word say? So they pursued, studying more about the Bible and finding out what it says, and left the Catholic Church in pursuit of what is true?

What does the Bible teach? Pastor Marv mentioned a Bible study with somebody named Bill Ford, and I don't know all the details, but regardless, over this period of time of questioning and reading the Bible, these ladies came to the realization that they didn't have to do all these things to have eternal life.

They could just trust in him and what he accomplished for them. And Betty, when I was speaking to her, spoke, and I can only imagine that Carolyn had the same experience.

[48 : 22] When they realized this, when they saw the truth of the gospel, it was a weight that came lifted off of their lives. The weight of sin, the weight of the law, lifted off.

And they experienced eternal life right then and there. Experienced the life of God in them just by trusting in him, just by knowing what Jesus Christ did for them.

And when they found out about this and discovered it for themselves and opened up the Bible and how come I didn't see this before? How come nobody ever told me about this before?

It was there all along. They wanted to let everybody that they could know. Started Bible studies and telling all their family members and leading their family members to also know about the eternal life that they can have in Christ.

And today, I think that's what Carolyn wanted today. Even after she's gone, she wanted this service to be another opportunity for her to get the word out about eternal life.

[49 : 41] that anyone who's willing, anyone who's willing to just trust him can have that life today.

Not tomorrow, but right now. And you don't, when you trust in Christ, you don't have to wonder, is he going to give it to me?

Am I worth it? Have I done enough? Because it's a gift. It's not something that you have to earn.

That was her big discovery.

I don't have to do these things. I don't have to remember all of my sins. I don't have to make sure I show up to church every single Sunday in order to get it, in order to earn that.

He did it. He accomplished it all for me. One of the things that John wrote in his letter, this is in 1 John 5, verse 13, and this is such an important thing.

[50 : 49] Something that was missing in Carolyn's experience in the Catholic church that she went to. John says this. He's writing about Jesus and what Jesus accomplished, and he says this, 1 John 5, verse 13.

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.

He says, I'm telling you all these things because I want you to know you can know you have eternal life. You don't have to wonder. You can know that you have eternal life because he offered a gift, and he said elsewhere, it says elsewhere in the scriptures that anyone who comes to him, he will never cast out.

Anyone who comes to him and says, I want the gift, he's never going to turn you away. It doesn't matter what you've done. He'll never turn you away.

He'll always accept you. And so we can have confidence because he did it all, and he's willing to accept anyone. And that's where our confidence lies.

[52 : 04] It's not in us. Can I reach? Can I do? Can I make it? Can I crawl up the ladder? Can I crawl up that mountain to make it to heaven, to make it to God? And you know, many have heard this message for years.

This message that I think Carolyn wanted everyone to know. And so, the last question I'll ask, what about you? Do you have that eternal life?

Do you know that you have that eternal life because you've trusted in him? You know, sometimes people hear the message, they hear this gospel message over and over and over again, but they've never taken that step, made that decision, I'm going to trust in him.

I'm not going to try, or I'm not going to just ignore what God did for me. I need to put my trust in him. God's good to us, isn't he?

To do all that for us. He didn't have to. He really didn't. He didn't have to do any of it, but he did. And I'm so grateful. Carolyn is so grateful.

[53 : 22] I'm going to read to end here. This is, you'll find this insert in your bullets, and I put a couple of poems in here. One, Tanya shared with me, and I'll read that one. The other one is by Fanny Crosby, which I just thought was neat.

She was such a good poet and a songwriter, but the one opposite to the one by Fanny Crosby, there's no author. But it says this, and this is, Tanya was saying, and this is what her mom, this is kind of where her mom's coming from.

Don't grieve for me, for now I'm free. I'm following the path God has chosen for me. I took his hand when I heard him call. I turned my back and I left it all. I could not stay another day to laugh, to love, to work, or play.

Tasks left undone must stay that way. I've now found peace at the end of the day. If my parting has left a void, then fill it with remembered joys. A friendship shared, a laugh, a kiss.

Oh yes, these things I too will miss, but not burdened with times of sorrow. Look for the sunshine of tomorrow. My life's been full. I savored much.

[54 : 32] My friends, or good friends, good times, a loved one's touch. Perhaps my time seems all too brief. Don't lengthen your pain with undue grief.

Lift up your heart and peace to thee. God wanted me, now he's set me free. So Karen's message, don't worry about me. I'm good.

She's had eternal life for, what, 50 years. And she's enjoying more of that today than she did yesterday. And it's an eternal life that we all, who trust in Christ, have to look forward to as well. And so we can celebrate both Carolyn and the eternal life that he gave us and that we have. Just in thinking how to end, I wanted to just open it up.

If there's any other words that anybody wants, anything anybody else wants to say, we'll go ahead and get the microphone out and see if there's anybody. Nobody has to, but I thought it would be a good opportunity if anybody wanted to share anything, whether it's about the message that we gave or something else related to Carolyn.

[55 : 47] Thank you. Thank you. All right.

Well, I think it would be appropriate. To end with a song. And a song of victory. That song that we sang, Victory in Jesus, what's the number here?

Three fifty three. Three fifty three. Oh, and we even have an accompanist.

Thank you so much. Let's see. There are three verses on this. Let's just do verse one and verse three.

All right. And let's all stand up. We're singing a song of victory. You can't sing a song of victory sitting in your chair, can you? All right. Here we go. I heard an old, old story.

[57 : 27] How a Savior came from glory. How he gave his life on Calvary to save a wretch like me.

I heard about his groanings of his precious blood's atoning. Then I repented of my sins and won the victory.

Oh, victory in Jesus, my Savior forever. He sought me and he bought me with his redeeming blood. He loved me ere I knew him. And all my love is due him. He plunged me to victory beneath the cleansing flood.

Verse number three. I heard about a mansion that he has built for me in glory. And I heard about the streets of gold beyond the crystal sea.

[58 : 53] About the angels singing and the old redemption story. And some sweet day I'll sing up there the song of victory.

Let's sing it out. Oh, victory in Jesus forever. He sought me and he bought me with his redeeming blood.

He loved me ere I knew him. And all my love is due him. He plunged me to victory beneath the cleansing flood.

Let's pray. Father, we have victory because of you. We are so grateful for eternal life. Why did you love us so much? I still do not fully comprehend why you would love us so much.

But I'm so glad that you did. I'm so glad that you did. Thank you for loving us so much. Giving us a gift that we didn't have to pay for. The gift of eternal life that we can have right now.

[60 : 10] If there's anybody in my hearing, Father, that has not received that gift as of yet, work in their hearts. Show them they can come to you and they can have full confidence in you.

That they can have that eternal life just by asking. In Jesus' mighty name. And everybody said? Amen. Thanks, everyone.