

Do We Presently Possess Eternal Life?

By Pat Donahue

Notice the following Bible passages that clearly teach that a faithful Christian has present possession of “everlasting life”:

- John 3:36 He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.
- John 5:24 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.
- John 6:47 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.
- John 6:54 Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.
- I John 3:15 Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.
- I John 5:11-13 And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.

As with any Bible subject, we should take the plain meaning of these six passages unless something elsewhere in the Bible dictates otherwise. Many teach that there is such justification (to reject the obvious meaning in this case) because of passages like the following that teach that we “hope” for eternal life:

- Titus 1:2 In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began;
- Luke 18:30 Who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting.

But passages like these two do not contradict the plain meaning of the six passages above. Let me illustrate. Suppose our baseball team has a lead going into the fourth inning. I could say we have (currently) the lead, and at the same time say that we hope to have the lead at the end of the game. You see, a team can have present possession of a lead at any point during the game, but until the end of the game, that lead is tenuous. Because it is possible for the lead to be lost, we can presently possess the lead, and yet still hope to have the lead at the end of the game. This especially makes sense when we understand that having the lead during the game is good, but having the lead at the end of the game is all that matters in the end. The end of the game lead cannot be lost. That is the only score that will count.

The same is true of eternal life. We presently possess it if we are faithful Christians. But until our life is over (Revelation 14:13) our possession of eternal life is tenuous, since it is possible to lose it (fall from grace, Galatians 5:4). It is important to possess eternal life

presently, but what will matter the most in the end is if we possess eternal life at our death, and therefore in the hereafter, where we can't lose it.

Some say that we only possess eternal life "in prospect" or "in hope." But that is really saying that we don't actually possess eternal life here and now, and that would contradict the six proof texts that this article begins with. And as far as I know, there is no passage forcing us to the conclusion that we only possess eternal life in prospect while on this earth.

A reading of John 6:29-58 would seem to indicate that the terms "eternal life" and "spiritual life" are used interchangeably and refer to the same thing. Notice that "eternal life" is used in antithesis to spiritual death in Romans 6:23 ("For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord"). I think the reader will agree that I John 5:12 is talking about our present possession of spiritual life, and it is made equivalent to "eternal life" in verses 11 and 13.

In conclusion, the Bible teaches that faithful Christians are in present possession of eternal (spiritual) life. But we can lose that life/salvation, therefore we hope to have the same at the day of judgment.

“Do We Presently Possess Eternal Life?”—A Response

by Thomas N. Thrasher

I wish to respond briefly to the article Pat sent. It is always a pleasure to study God’s word, especially with those for whom I have great respect, and who demonstrate a fervent desire for truth. Pat and I both view discussions like this as a means of Bible study.

My brother begins by quoting several passages that he says “clearly teach that a faithful Christian has present possession of ‘everlasting life’”: John 3:36; 5:24; 6:47, 54; 1 John 3:15; 5:11-13. I believe these statements speak of the PROMISE and HOPE of eternal life that true believers have which will be completely fulfilled in the FUTURE.

Pat anticipates this point: “Some say that we only possess eternal life ‘in prospect’ or ‘in hope.’ But that is really saying that we don’t actually possess eternal life here and now, and that would contradict the six proof texts that this article begins with.”

Please read Joshua 6:2-4, “And the Lord said unto Joshua, See, I *HAVE GIVEN* into thine hand Jericho, ... And ye shall compass the city ... once. Thus shalt thou do six days. And seven priests SHALL bear before the ark seven trumpets of rams’ horns: and the seventh day ye SHALL compass the city seven times, and the priests SHALL blow with the trumpets. And it SHALL come to pass, that when they make a long blast with the ram’s horn, and when ye hear the sound of the trumpet, all the people SHALL shout with a great shout; and the wall of the city SHALL fall down flat, and the people SHALL ascend up every man straight before him.”

This text states God’s PROMISE to Israel concerning Jericho and the HOPE they should have concerning receiving it. According to Pat’s reasoning, if Israel “only” possessed Jericho “in prospect” or “in hope,” then “that is really saying that” Israel did not “actually possess” Jericho then and there, “and that would contradict” verse 2 that our quotation “begins with”! No, the passage demonstrates God’s PROMISE and Israel’s HOPE that had not yet been realized. The fulfillment was clearly FUTURE when God said, “I *have given* into thine hand Jericho”! Similarly, when the Bible sometimes speaks of our having “eternal life,” it is in PROMISE and HOPE, as the passages quoted below teach. It is not a contradiction to say we HAVE it while speaking of God’s promise and our hope.

My brother comments, “As with any Bible subject, we should take the plain meaning of these six passages unless something elsewhere in the Bible dictates otherwise.” I believe the Bible “dictates otherwise” in many places.

“Eternal life” is in the WORLD TO COME!

Mark 10:30, “But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and **IN THE WORLD TO COME** *eternal life*.”

Luke 18:30, “Who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and **IN THE WORLD TO COME** *life everlasting*.”

1 Timothy 6:19, “Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the **TIME TO COME**, that they may lay hold on *eternal life*.”

“Eternal life” is a PROMISE!

Titus 1:2, “In hope of *eternal life*, which God, that cannot lie, **PROMISED** before the world began.”

1 John 2:25, “And this is the **PROMISE** that he hath promised us, even *eternal life*.”

“Eternal life” is that for which we HOPE!

Titus 1:2, “In **HOPE** of *eternal life*, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began.”

Titus 3:7, “That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the **HOPE** of *eternal life*.”

What we “hope” for, we do **NOT** *now* have! “For we are saved by *hope*: but *hope* that is *seen* is *not hope*: for what a man *seeth*, why doth he yet *hope* for? But if we *hope* for that we *see not*, then do we with patience **WAIT FOR IT**” (Romans 8:24-25).

What we “hope” for is laid up for us **IN HEAVEN**: “For the *hope* which is laid up for you **IN HEAVEN**, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel” (Colossians 1:5).

Our “hope” is to continue unto the **END**: “But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the *hope* firm **UNTO THE END**” (Hebrews 3:6). “And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of *hope* **UNTO THE END**” (Hebrews 6:11). “Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and *hope* **TO THE END** for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 1:13).

We serve God UNTO “Eternal life”!

John 6:27, “Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth **UNTO** *everlasting life*, which the Son of man shall give unto you: ...”

Jude 21, “Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ **UNTO** *eternal life*.”

We will go INTO “Life Eternal” on the Judgment Day!

Matthew 25:41, 46, “Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, INTO *everlasting fire*, prepared for the devil and his angels: ... And these shall go away INTO *everlasting punishment*: but the righteous INTO *life eternal*.” The time at which some go “into” *everlasting fire/punishment* is the same time that others go “into” *life eternal*!

When do the righteous go INTO *life eternal*—in this life or at the Judgment?

“Everlasting life” is at THE END

Romans 6:22, “But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and THE END *everlasting life*.”

God’s people shall INHERIT “Everlasting life”!

Matthew 19:29, “And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name’s sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall INHERIT *everlasting life*.”

“Eternal life” is contrasted with PERISHING!

John 3:15-16, “That whosoever believeth in him should NOT PERISH, but have *eternal life*. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should NOT PERISH, but have *everlasting life*.”

John 10:28, “And I give unto them *eternal life*; and they shall NEVER PERISH ...”

Is the “perishing” spoken of in these verses to occur *before* the Judgment or *after* it?

Pat’s Illustration

Pat introduces an “illustration” to show that we can be in present possession of “eternal life,” yet we can still HOPE for it in the future. However, the “lead” of which he speaks is, quite obviously, in no sense ETERNAL. However, our difference concerns *having* ETERNAL life as a *present possession* (NOW!). I quote his illustration in italics with my comments in brackets: “*Suppose our baseball team has a lead [not an ETERNAL lead!] going into the fourth inning. I could say we have (currently) the lead [but you wouldn’t say you have an ETERNAL lead, would you, Pat?], and at the same time say that we hope to have the lead at the end of the game. You see, a team can have present possession of a lead [an ETERNAL lead?] at any*

point during the game, but until the end of the game, that [eternal?] lead is tenuous. Because it is possible for the [eternal?] lead to be lost, we can presently possess the [eternal?] lead, and yet still hope to have the [eternal?] lead at the end of the game.” Other respects in which his illustration fails to parallel “*eternal life*” is that our subject directly involves a PROMISE, the WORLD TO COME, an INHERITANCE, and the END, and is an object to be entered later (UNTO, INTO).

Continuing his illustration, Pat observed, “The same is true of eternal life. We presently possess it ... But until our life is over (Revelation 14:13) our possession of eternal life is TENUOUS, since it is possible to LOSE IT” (caps mine, TT).

- “Tenuous” means “not substantial; slight; flimsy” [*Webster’s New World Dictionary*, 1988, page 1380]. If this describes the “eternal life” for which Pat is contending, it is certainly not the “eternal life” of which the Bible speaks!
- Since Pat contends it is “possible to LOSE” the “eternal life” for which he is contending, is it really *eternal*? The word translated “eternal” is defined as “without end” in such passages as Matthew 19:29; 25:46; Mark 10:30; Luke 18:30; John 3:15f; 3:36; 1 John 2:25 [BAGD, page 28].

Pat asserts, “A reading of John 6:29-58 would SEEM TO INDICATE that the terms ‘eternal life’ and ‘spiritual life’ are used interchangeably and refer to the same thing.” [caps mine, TT]. A few observations are in order here.

- “Seem to indicate” is not *proof* of Pat’s point!
- Neither the word “spiritual” nor the expression “spiritual life” are found in this passage.
- If “*spiritual life*” can be LOST, then is it “*eternal life*”?

Pat comments, “‘Eternal life’ is used in antithesis to spiritual death in Romans 6:23.” That would not prove Pat’s position. Look at the context: “But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and THE END *everlasting life*. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 6:22-23). *Eternal life* is “the gift of God” to be received at THE END!

In what sense do faithful Christians HAVE “eternal life”? In PROMISE and in HOPE, the fulfillment of which is conditioned upon faithful obedience to the Lord (Hebrews 5:9; Revelation 22:14). The blessing of eternal life will be received at His return: “... and *hope to the end* for the grace that is to be brought unto you *at the revelation of Jesus Christ*” (1 Peter 1:13).

This response has been brief in comparison to all that I could have written. It is somewhat longer than Pat’s short article because, as Pat and I jokingly say, “It takes longer to clean up a ‘mess’ than it does to make it!”

--Thomas N. Thrasher, 1705 Sandra Street SW, Decatur, AL 35601

Pat's Rebuttal

(Note: Since Pat quoted my article in responding, I have put his quotations of my article in italics and his comments in bold print for easier reading. TT)

NH brethren,

First of all, I don't consider this issue that important, but maybe it is worth discussing further.

comments below

Pat

> *"Do We Presently Possess Eternal Life?"-A Response*
>
> *I wish to respond briefly to the article Pat sent. It is always a pleasure to study God's word, > > especially with those for whom I have great respect, and who demonstrate a fervent desire for > truth. Pat and I both view discussions like this as a means of Bible study.*

Agree 100%.

> *My brother begins by quoting several passages that he says "clearly teach that a faithful > > > Christian has present possession of 'everlasting life': John 3:36; 5:24; 6:47, 54; 1 John 3:15; > 5:11-13. I believe these statements speak of the PROMISE and HOPE of eternal life that true > believers have which will be completely fulfilled in the FUTURE.*

>
> *Pat anticipates this point: "Some say that we only possess eternal life 'in prospect' or 'in hope.' > But that is really saying that we don't actually possess eternal life here and now, and that > > > would contradict the six proof texts that this article begins with."*

>
> *Please read Joshua 6:2-4, "And the Lord said unto Joshua, See, I HAVE GIVEN into thine > > hand Jericho, ... And ye shall compass the city . once. Thus shalt thou do six days. And seven > > priests SHALL bear before the ark seven trumpets of rams' horns: and the seventh day ye > > > SHALL compass the city seven times, and the priests SHALL blow with the trumpets. And it > > SHALL come to pass, that when they make a long blast with the ram's horn, and when ye hear > the sound of the trumpet, all the people SHALL shout with a great shout; and the wall of the > city SHALL fall down flat, and the people SHALL ascend up every man straight before him."*

>
> *This text states God's PROMISE to Israel concerning Jericho and the HOPE they should have > concerning receiving it. According to Pat's reasoning, if Israel "only"*

possessed Jericho "in > > prospect" or "in hope," then "that is really saying that" Israel did not "actually possess" > > > Jericho then and there, "and that would contradict" verse 2 that our quotation "begins with"!

I don't see why. God had "given" it to them, but it was not actually in their possession at that time. They had to compass the city to get it. Aren't we agreed on this point?

Sometimes you "give" something to someone, but since it is a conditional gift, it is not in their possession at the moment you give it to them. The same could be said about salvation. Jesus paid for the remission of sins when he died (Mt 26:28), but it is not in our possession until we obey (Acts 2:38).

> No, the passage demonstrates God's PROMISE and Israel's HOPE that had not yet been > > > realized. The fulfillment was clearly FUTURE when God said, "I have given into thine hand > > Jericho"!

> Similarly, when the Bible sometimes speaks of our having "eternal life," it is in PROMISE and > HOPE, as the passages quoted below teach. It is not a contradiction to say we HAVE it while > speaking of God's promise and our hope.

>

> My brother comments, "As with any Bible subject, we should take the plain meaning of these > > six passages unless something elsewhere in the Bible dictates otherwise." I believe the Bible > > "dictates otherwise" in many places.

>

> "Eternal life" is in the WORLD TO COME!

>

> Mark 10:30, "But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and > sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and IN THE WORLD TO > > COME eternal life."

>

> Luke 18:30, "Who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and IN THE WORLD > TO COME life everlasting."

>

> 1 Timothy 6:19, "Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the TIME TO > > COME, that they may lay hold on eternal life."

What Tommy's passages all demonstrate is that we receive eternal life in the world to come, but that doesn't argue against having it now. I hope to have hair when I am 70, but that doesn't mean I don't have it now. I realize I could lose it. If God were to predict that I will have hair when I am 70 (yea!), I would not necessarily conclude that I don't have hair now, but I would conclude that I have hair now and AND am going to have it then.

>

"Eternal life" is a PROMISE!

>

> Titus 1:2, "In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, PROMISED before the world > > began."

If someone promised that I would have hair when I am 70 if I don't worry too much, I wouldn't necessarily conclude that I don't have hair now. I would conclude that it was possible for me to lose my hair.

> 1 John 2:25, "And this is the PROMISE that he hath promised us, even eternal life."

>

> "Eternal life" is that for which we HOPE!

>

> Titus 1:2, "In HOPE of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world > > began."

>

> Titus 3:7, "That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the HOPE > of eternal life."

>

> What we "hope" for, we do NOT now have! "For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen > is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see > > not, then do we with patience WAIT FOR IT" (Romans 8:24-25).

But we can hope for something that we already have if we can lose it, as already demonstrated with the hair and (ballgame) lead examples.

> What we "hope" for is laid up for us IN HEAVEN: "For the hope which is laid up for you IN > HEAVEN, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel" (Colossians 1:5).

We are not in heaven, but we hope for it.

> Our "hope" is to continue unto the END: "But Christ as a son over his own house; whose > house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm UNTO THE

> END" (Hebrews 3:6). "And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the > full assurance of hope UNTO THE END" (Hebrews 6:11). "Wherefore gird up the loins of > > your mind, be sober, and hope TO THE END for the grace that is to be brought unto you at > > the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:13).

>

> We serve God UNTO "Eternal life"!

>

> John 6:27, "Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth UNTO > everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you:

This passage is most likely talking about the everlasting life that God gives us in this life considering that God says that believers (complete belief) already possess it (6:47).

> *Jude 21, "Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ > > UNTO eternal life."*

This doesn't say when you get eternal life (now or then), but if talking about then, the wording wouldn't say you don't also get it now. Alabama has the lead at halftime, but 2nd half touchdowns are "unto" the lead at the end of the game (which is what they hope for).

> *We will go INTO "Life Eternal" on the Judgment Day!*

>

> *Matthew 25:41, 46, "Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye > > cursed, INTO everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: And these shall go away > INTO everlasting punishment: but the righteous INTO life eternal." The time at which some go > "into" everlasting fire/punishment is the same time that others go "into" life eternal!*

> *When do the righteous go INTO life eternal-in this life or at the Judgment?*

Both. I gave six passages that show now, and you are showing this (and other) passages that say then. There is no contradiction. We have it at both times. It makes perfectly good sense if you understand that "eternal life" is something you can lose in this life. Just like salvation. Just because the Baptist says you can't love salvation doesn't make it so, and just because someone else says you can't lose eternal life, doesn't make that so either. Adam and Eve possessed eternal physical life until they sinned, but they lost it. God can give someone eternal life and he can take it away. As a matter of fact, he can do anything he wants to. So it is a matter of what does the revelation teach, not what can or can't be done. And John 3:36 clearly teaches you can lose everlasting life when taken in combination with Heb 3:12.

> *"Everlasting life" is at THE END*

>

> *Romans 6:22, "But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your > fruit unto holiness, and THE END everlasting life."*

Alabama had the lead against TN in the end of the game, but that doesn't mean they didn't have the lead at the end of the half. Since you can lose eternal life, then Rom 6:22 makes perfect good sense because while it is important to have eternal life during our life, it is more important that we have it when we die (Rev 14:13), at the end.

> *God's people shall INHERIT "Everlasting life"!*

>

> *Matthew 19:29, "And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or > mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and > > shall INHERIT everlasting life."*

It is most important then, but the Bible also says we have it now (my six passages).

> *"Eternal life" is contrasted with PERISHING!*
>
> *John 3:15-16, "That whosoever believeth in him should NOT PERISH, but have eternal life. > > For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in > > him should NOT PERISH, but have everlasting life."*

This is probably talking about the everlasting life that we receive at the end, not the everlasting life that we possess now.

> *John 10:28, "And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall NEVER PERISH ..."*
> *Is the "perishing" spoken of in these verses to occur before the Judgment or after it?*

Could go either way. As long as a person remains a sheep, he shall never perish in this life or the world to come.

> *Pat's Illustration*
>
> *Pat introduces an "illustration" to show that we can be in present possession of "eternal life," > yet we can still HOPE for it in the future. However, the "lead" of which he speaks is, quite > > > obviously, in no sense ETERNAL.*

But it still illustrates what I said it did, that we can hope for something that we already possess (if that something can possibly be lost). That is all I was trying to illustrate.

> *However, our difference concerns having ETERNAL life as a present possession (NOW!). I > > quote his illustration in italics with my comments in brackets: "Suppose our baseball team has > a lead [not an ETERNAL lead!] going into the fourth inning. I could say we have (currently) > the lead [but you wouldn't say you have an ETERNAL lead, would you, Pat?],*

No, but God said that we have eternal life (my six passages).

> *and at the same time say that we hope to have the lead at the end of the game. You see, a team > can have present possession of a lead [an ETERNAL lead?] at any point during the game, but > until the end of the game, that [eternal?] lead is tenuous. Because it is possible for the > > > [eternal?] lead to be lost, we can presently possess the [eternal?] lead, and yet still hope to > > have the [eternal?] lead at the end of the game." Other respects in which his illustration fails > to parallel "eternal life" is that our subject directly involves a PROMISE, the WORLD TO > > > COME, an INHERITANCE, and the END, and is an object to be entered later (UNTO, INTO).*
>

> Continuing his illustration, Pat observed, "The same is true of eternal life. We presently > > > possess it . But until our life is over (Revelation 14:13) our possession of eternal life is > > > TENUOUS, since it is possible to LOSE IT" (caps mine, TT).

>
> . "Tenuous" means "not substantial; slight; flimsy" [Webster's New World Dictionary, 1988, > > page 1380]. If this describes the "eternal life" for which Pat is contending, it is certainly not > > the "eternal life" of which the Bible speaks!

I may have the wrong English word, but the concept I taught is true, you can lose your eternal life (salvation).

> . Since Pat contends it is "possible to LOSE" the "eternal life" for which he is contending, is it > really eternal? The word translated "eternal" is defined as "without end" in such passages as > Matthew 19:29; 25:46; Mark 10:30; Luke 18:30; John 3:15f; 3:36; 1 John 2:25 [BAGD, page > 28].

There is no Bible rule that says you can't lose eternal life. It is life without end, but keeping it is conditional in this life (just like salvation).

> Pat asserts, "A reading of John 6:29-58 would SEEM TO INDICATE that the terms 'eternal > > life' and 'spiritual life' are used interchangeably and refer to the same thing." [caps mine, TT]. > A few observations are in order here.

>
> . "Seem to indicate" is not proof of Pat's point!

>
> . Neither the word "spiritual" nor the expression "spiritual life" are found in this passage.

>
> . If "spiritual life" can be LOST, then is it "eternal life"?

>
> Pat comments, "'Eternal life' is used in antithesis to spiritual death in Romans 6:23." That > > > would not prove Pat's position. Look at the context: "But now being made free from sin, and > > become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and THE END everlasting life. For > the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" > > > (Romans 6:22-23). Eternal life is "the gift of God" to be received at THE END!

>
> In what sense do faithful Christians HAVE "eternal life"? In PROMISE and in HOPE, the > > > fulfillment of which is conditioned upon faithful obedience to the Lord (Hebrews 5:9; > > > > Revelation 22:14). The blessing of eternal life will be received at His return: " and hope to the > end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter > > > > 1:13).

Again, if you mean in promise and hope ONLY, then you are asserting that we don't actually have eternal life right now, which contradicts my six plain passages. Really

Jesus just comes right out and says it. The truth is we have eternal life in actual possession AND in promise and hope just like my hair.

Notice that Mt 10:22 says that "He that endureth to the end shall be saved." This is saying that we will receive salvation at our death or at the judgment day. But it doesn't mean that we don't receive salvation at baptism. Mark 16:16 says that we do. Do we HOPE for the salvation PROMISED in Mt 10:22? Yes. Does that mean we don't have salvation now? No. What it does mean is that though we have salvation now, we can lose it. So we hope to have it on the day we die (Rev 14:13) when it really counts.

> This response has been brief in comparison to all that I could have written. It is somewhat > > longer than Pat's short article because, as Pat and I jokingly say, "It takes longer to clean up a > 'mess' than it does to make it!"

>

> --Thomas N. Thrasher, 1705 Sandra Street SW, Decatur, AL 35601

I am enjoying the study and appreciate Tommy taking the time to respond to my original article. It makes me love and respect Tommy more, not less. And my personal friendship feeling for him is deepened (not lessened) because he took the time to try to correct me on something he feels I am wrong on. I appreciate that so much in him. And the rest of you also for speaking up in class.

Like I said, I don't consider this a major deal. I thought I would bring it up over e-mail because it came up in class on Aug 3, and because I already had an article on the subject. I leave you with these two verses:

Jn 6:53 Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.

That doesn't make sense if the people who eat and drink of Jesus (appropriate his sacrifice to themselves) don't have that life in them. And verse 54 shows that he is talking about eternal life in verse 53.

Similar to this is the verse Mark brought up in the class this morning ...

I Jn 3:15 Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.

That doesn't make good sense if non-murderers (also faithful in other respects) don't have that life abiding in them.

Notice that Mt 10:22 says that "He that endureth to the end shall be saved." This is saying that we will receive salvation at our death or at the judgment day. But it doesn't mean that we don't receive salvation at baptism. Mark 16:16 says that we do. Do we HOPE for the salvation PROMISED in Mt 10:22? Yes. Does that mean

we don't have salvation now? No. What it does mean is that though we have salvation now, we can lose it. So we hope to have it on the day we die (Rev 14:13) when it really counts.

Conclusion: Since there are many passages that teach we have eternal life in the here and now, and there are NO passages that say or teach that we don't (none of Tommy's passages said or taught that we don't have it now), then the conclusion would seem to me to be obvious.

Love,

Pat

(Note: Pat sent an additional point to his response in a subsequent message. I have incorporated it into his original response as the next-to-last paragraph. TT)

Thomas Thrasher's Second Response

Pat introduced his rebuttal by saying, "I don't consider this issue that important." Perhaps not. However, he once made a Wednesday night talk on the subject. A few months ago, he also wrote an article on this and sent it to *Faith and Facts Quarterly*. Recently, he distributed his article by e-mail to the congregation. When his article was published in *Faith and Facts Quarterly*, I told Pat that I might respond; however, I did not do so until he sent his e-mail message to the congregation. Nevertheless, I agree with Pat that the topic "is worth discussing further," since such a study leads us to examine a number of Bible passages.

I quoted Joshua 6:2-4 in my first response: "And the Lord said unto Joshua, See, I HAVE GIVEN into thine hand Jericho, ..." I pointed out that this was "God's PROMISE to Israel concerning Jericho and the HOPE they should have concerning receiving it." I indicated that, ACCORDING TO PAT'S REASONING on the "six passages" to which he referred several times, "if Israel 'only' possessed Jericho 'in prospect' or 'in hope,' then 'that is really saying that' Israel did not 'actually possess' Jericho then and there, 'and that would contradict' verse 2 that our quotation 'begins with'!" In other words, God said he had GIVEN it to them, but they did NOT ACTUALLY POSSESS it yet! Jericho was their's in PROMISE and HOPE, although not in actual possession.

My statement was a parallel to the antepenultimate paragraph of Pat's initial article. There he contended, "Some say that we only possess eternal life 'in prospect' or 'in hope.' But that is really saying that we don't actually possess eternal life here and now, and that would contradict the six proof texts that this article begins with." However, if those six passages are teaching that we *have* eternal life in *promise* and *hope*, there is no contradiction at all! That is my position.

Pat comments on Joshua 6: "God had 'given' it to them, but it was not actually in their possession at that time." Consequently, since God GAVE Jericho to them, there was some sense in which they HAD it (in "promise" and "hope"), although it was not ACTUALLY in their possession at that time. Recognizing this, why can't Pat see that, with reference to the six passages he continues to mention, eternal life can be "given" to believers, "but it was not actually in their possession at that time" (except in the sense of promise and hope)!

Jericho (Joshua 6)	Eternal life (six passages Pat cited)
<p>God GAVE Jericho to Israel. Israel HAD Jericho (in promise and hope)</p>	<p>God GAVE eternal life to believers. Believers HAVE eternal life (in promise and hope)</p>

<p>without their having it in ACTUAL POSSESSION at that time. The actual possession of Jericho came later.</p>	<p>without their having it in ACTUAL POSSESSION at that time. The actual possession of eternal life comes later.</p>
---	---

In reference to the Israelites receiving Jericho, my beloved brother says, “They had to compass the city to get it”! Hence, they didn’t POSSESS it until they completed their obedience, even though God had “given” it to them. Similarly, we do not POSSESS eternal life until we complete our obedience at “the end” (Hebrews 3:6; 6:11; Romans 6:22; 1 Peter 1:13).

Pat observed, “Sometimes you ‘give’ something to someone, but ... it is not in their possession at the moment you give it to them.” Therefore, God can “give” eternal life as a promise to believers without its being “in their possession at the moment” God gives “it to them” (as a promise for which they hope). Why does Pat think it is so unreasonable that “it is not in their possession” until the “end”?

After citing my quotations of Mark 10:30, Luke 18:30, and 1 Timothy 6:19, my friend states: “What Tommy’s passages all demonstrate is that we receive eternal life in the world to come.” Therefore, there is no need for me to cite more passages to sustain this point. Pat acknowledges that “we receive eternal life in the world to come.”

Pat introduces a “hair” illustration to bolster his contention. I quote him with my comments in brackets: “I hope to have hair [eternal hair?] when I am 70, but that doesn’t mean I don’t have it [eternal hair?] now. I realize I could lose it [if the hair he has NOW is “eternal hair,” how could he LOSE it? If he could lose it, it must not be “eternal”!]. ... it was possible for me to lose my hair” [again indicating his hair is NOT eternal and, therefore, not parallel with “eternal life” that he is trying to illustrate!].

Attempting to maintain his illustrations, my brother asserts, “But we can hope for something that we already have if we can lose it, as already demonstrated with the hair and (ballgame) lead examples.” However, I ask again: “If we can lose it,” is it really ETERNAL???

Commenting on Colossians 1:5 (“For the hope which is laid up for you IN HEAVEN...”), Pat recognizes, “We are not in heaven, but we hope for it.” But “heaven” is where *eternal* life is!

- 2 Corinthians 5:1-4, “For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, ETERNAL IN THE HEAVENS. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from HEAVEN: If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of LIFE.”

- Luke 12:33, "... provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the HEAVENS that FAILETH NOT, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth" (This treasure does not fail, cannot be stolen, nor be corrupted—it is ETERNAL!)
- Matthew 6:20, "But lay up for yourselves treasures in HEAVEN, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal" (They cannot be corrupted, stolen, nor lost—they are ETERNAL!)
- 1 Peter 1:4, "To an INHERITANCE incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in HEAVEN for you." We INHERIT "eternal life" (Matthew 19:29, "And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall INHERIT everlasting life."), but that "inheritance" is "reserved in HEAVEN" (1 Peter 1:4). Since our INHERITANCE is reserved in HEAVEN, but that inheritance involves ETERNAL LIFE, then eternal life is in HEAVEN, not on the earth now.

Responding to my quotation of John 6:27 ("Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which *endureth* UNTO *everlasting life*, which the Son of man SHALL GIVE unto you..."), Pat states: "This passage is MOST LIKELY talking about the everlasting life that God gives us in this life" (caps mine, TT). With this statement Pat admits the POSSIBILITY that *eternal life* in this verse is NOT "in this life"! He does not *know for certain* that it supports his position, for he knows it MIGHT have reference to eternal life in "the world to come."

Responding to Jude 21 ("Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ UNTO *eternal life*."), Pat comments, "This doesn't say when you get eternal life ..." However, while these Christians were KEEPING themselves in the love of God, they were "LOOKING ... UNTO eternal life"! Sounds like they didn't HAVE it as a present possession!

Once more Pat appeals to his "lead at halftime" illustration: "Alabama has the lead at halftime," which he knows they could very well LOSE during the second half. Therefore, the "halftime lead" is NOT *eternal*, which is wherein his "illustration" does NOT "illustrate" the present POSSESSION of "eternal life" by a believer.

After quoting Matthew 26:41, 46, I asked: "When do the righteous go INTO life eternal—in this life or at the Judgment?" Pat answers, "Both." But the inspired TEXT cited says the righteous go "INTO life eternal" at the day of Judgment!

My brother again claims "that 'eternal life' is something you can LOSE in this life." How is it then "eternal" life???

PAT asserts that "Adam and Eve possessed ETERNAL PHYSICAL LIFE until they sinned, but they lost it" (caps mine, TT). Where does the BIBLE say that Adam and Eve "possessed eternal physical life"?—book, chapter, and verse, please!

In fact, the text indicates otherwise. In Genesis 3:22-24, "And the LORD God said, ... and now, lest he [the man] put forth his hand, and take ALSO of the TREE OF LIFE, and eat, and LIVE FOR EVER: Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword ... to keep the way of the TREE OF LIFE." Therefore, Adam and Eve were prevented from taking "ALSO of the TREE OF LIFE" and living forever. They did NOT have "eternal physical life"!

We will gain access to the TREE OF LIFE in HEAVEN!

- Revelation 2:7, “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the TREE OF LIFE, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.”
- Revelation 22:2, “In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the TREE OF LIFE ...”
- Revelation 22:14, “Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the TREE OF LIFE, and may enter in through the gates into the city.”

Pat claims, “John 3:36 clearly teaches you can lose everlasting life when taken in combination with Heb 3:12.” In fact, John 3:36 does NOT teach anything about “losing” everlasting life. The text says, “... he that believeth not the Son SHALL NOT SEE [future tense] LIFE; but the wrath of God abideth on him.” Nothing said about LOSING what he already has as a present possession; the LIFE here is in the FUTURE! Question: When does the “wrath of God” of this verse occur—in *this life* or in *eternity*? Hebrews 3:12 also says nothing about losing “*eternal life*.”

Again Pat alleges, “... you can lose eternal life ...,” which he still has not proven by the Bible. He attempts to support this idea once more with his football illustration. Pat, suppose Alabama had the lead at the half, but then the opponent won the game (sadly, this has happened a number of times!). Was Alabama’s lead at the half “eternal”???

Responding to my quotation of John 3:15-16 (“That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but HAVE ETERNAL life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but HAVE EVERLASTING LIFE.”), my brother states: “This is probably talking about the everlasting life that we receive at the end, NOT the everlasting life THAT WE POSSESS NOW” (caps mine, TT). Therefore, when the Bible says we “HAVE eternal life” (ASV) or “HAVE everlasting life” (KJV), it does NOT necessarily refer to “life that we possess now”!!! Why is it impossible that the same thing is true in the “six passages” to which Pat continues to appeal? Why can’t *those passages* also be “talking about the everlasting life that we receive at the end”???

- John 3:15-16 (“...HAVE eternal life.... HAVE everlasting life”). Pat says this is “probably talking about the everlasting life that we receive AT THE END” (caps mine, TT).
- John 3:36 (“... HATH everlasting life”)—Pat insists this MUST NOT be “the everlasting life that we receive AT THE END”—it MUST be everlasting life “we possess now.” WHY?
- John 5:24 (“... HATH everlasting life”)—Pat insists this MUST NOT be “the everlasting life that we receive AT THE END”—it MUST be everlasting life “we possess now.” WHY?
- John 6:47 (“... HATH everlasting life”)—Pat insists this MUST NOT be “the everlasting life that we receive AT THE END”—it MUST be everlasting life “we possess now.” WHY?
- John 6:54 (“... HATH eternal life”)—Pat insists this MUST NOT be “the everlasting life that we receive AT THE END”—it MUST be everlasting life “we possess now.” WHY?

- I John 3:15 (“... HATH eternal life”)—Pat insists this MUST NOT be “the everlasting life that we receive AT THE END”—it MUST be everlasting life “we possess now.” WHY?
- I John 5:11-13 (“... HAVE eternal life”)—Pat insists this MUST NOT be “the everlasting life that we receive AT THE END”—it MUST be everlasting life “we possess now.” WHY?

Referring to my friend’s “baseball lead” illustration, I observed, “However, the ‘lead’ of which he speaks is, quite obviously, in no sense ETERNAL.” Pat responded, “But it still illustrates what I said it did ...” Therefore, since the “baseball lead” is “in no sense ETERNAL,” but (as Pat contends) the life believers have NOW is “ETERNAL life,” then his “baseball lead” does NOT illustrate “eternal life”! In the same way, his “football lead” doesn’t illustrate “ETERNAL life” either, since that lead is also “in no sense ETERNAL”! Likewise, his “hair” doesn’t illustrate “ETERNAL life” either, since that hair is also “in no sense ETERNAL”!

Brother Donahue insists, “... but God said that we have eternal life (my six passages).” However, he has admitted that elsewhere (for example, John 3:15-16) that “HAVE eternal life.... HAVE everlasting life” is “probably talking about the everlasting life that we receive AT THE END”—“the world to come”! Pat, is it POSSIBLE that those “six passages” refer either to the promise/hope of eternal life or the eternal life we receive at the end?

In reference to his use of the word “tenuous” with regard to “our possession of eternal life,” Pat replied, “I may have the wrong English word, but the concept I taught is true, you can LOSE your ETERNAL LIFE” (caps mine, TT). Pat, what was that passage from God’s Book PROVING that “you can LOSE your ETERNAL LIFE”? You haven’t produced it yet.

Pat agrees that “ETERNAL life ... is life WITHOUT END” (caps mine, TT), yet he continues to assert that one can “LOSE” it! We can certainly *lose* the *life* we now have, but that fact demonstrates that this life is NOT *eternal* NOW!

My brother declares, “Really Jesus just comes right out and says it,” that is, that we “have eternal life [as an actual possession] right now.” Does He do it in John 3:15-16 (“... HAVE eternal life.... HAVE everlasting life”)? No, Pat says, “This is probably talking about the everlasting life that we receive at the end.” Is that what the Lord “just comes right out and says,” my brother?

Pat quotes Matthew 10:22, but he admits it does not refer to the “salvation” we can have now; therefore, it certainly does not teach that “eternal life” is an *actual, present possession*, as Pat has been contending.

Brother Donahue introduces Mark 16:16, which says nothing about “eternal life” as a present possession. I believe the “salvation” is deliverance from (or forgiveness of) PAST sins. Questions: If a person complies with the conditions of Mark 16:16,

exactly WHEN is he “saved”? Is that “salvation” eternal/everlasting? Does Acts 2:38 refer to receiving “remission” of PAST sins or FUTURE sins or BOTH?

Pat states concerning John 6:53, “That doesn't make sense if the people who eat and drink of Jesus ... don't have that life in them.” True believers now have spiritual life and the “promise” and “hope” of eternal life.

He cites 1 John 3:15 and says, “That doesn't make good sense if non-murderers ... don't have that life abiding in them.” Faithful believers do have eternal life in promise and in hope; however, an unrepentant murderer has neither the promise nor the hope (“abiding” in that sense).

In his concluding paragraph brother Donahue claims that “we have eternal life in the here and now, and there are NO passages that say or teach that we don't.” Allow me to quote Jesus' words in Mark 10:29-30—“Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, but he shall receive an hundredfold NOW IN THIS TIME, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and IN THE WORLD TO COME eternal life.” To which period does the Lord say “eternal life” is related—“now in this time” OR “in the world to come”? If “eternal life” is “now in this time” (as Pat contends), then the CONTRAST made by our Lord “doesn't make good sense” (to use Pat's words).

I appreciate the opportunity to study God's word through this means.

--Thomas N. Thrasher