

# Possessing Eternal Life

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Well, if we could, with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling this morning, if we could turn back to that portion of Scripture that we read in the Gospel according to John, and John chapter 6. John chapter 6, I'd like us to look at the passage which we read together, but if we just take as our text the words of verse 40. John chapter 6 at verse 40.

Where Jesus says, For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in Him should have eternal life, and I will raise Him up on the last day.

I want to begin with a question this morning. What's your greatest possession? What's your greatest possession? What do you cherish most in this life? What do you value and treasure? What's of significance and what's of importance to you? What's your greatest possession? You know, for some, their greatest possession is their family. Their greatest possession is their children or their grandchildren. For others, their greatest possession is their job or their position or their income or their education. For others, their greatest possession is their health because, well, your health is everything to you. Of course, our greatest possession, it can't be wealth because, as we all know, we either don't have it or we can't take it with us. But then there are those that, and their greatest possession in life is, well, all that they possess. That's their greatest possession. But the question we're being confronted with this morning is, what's your greatest possession? And maybe you know in your heart what should be your greatest possession. But if you're honest, it's not. That's why Jesus, He gives us that litmus test in the Sermon on the Mount where He says, where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

So, my friend, where is your heart today? Where are you in relation to Jesus Christ as a Christian? And someone who's not a Christian? What's your greatest possession? Because, as you know, what really matters is not your temporal possessions, but that you have an eternal possession. And even as Christians, what really matters is not our temporal possessions, but that we have an eternal possession. And, you know, for the unconverted, my unconverted friend, as we begin another year, without having this eternal possession, you lack the one thing needful, because you need to possess eternal life. You need to possess eternal life.

And that's what Jesus teaches us in this passage. Jesus teaches us about the importance of possessing eternal life. Because, you know, when everything in our lives is stripped back, and we're made to realize, as we have been reminded throughout the past few months that life is uncertain, death is sure, sin is the cause, and that Christ is the cure. You know, it's then that we can see that this is the only possession that we can leave this world with. The only possession we can leave this world with is eternal life. As we all know, we came into this world with nothing.

[ 3 : 3 3 ] And we will leave this world with nothing, unless we claim this possession that's offered to us in the gospel, the possession of eternal life. And so, my friend, I want you to listen and pay attention to what Jesus is saying to you this morning, because He's very clear. It's one thing about Jesus. As a preacher, He was very clear, and He gave instructions on how to possess this eternal life. And Jesus, He simply says to us, come to me, call to me, and commit to me.

That's the instructions He gives this morning in this passage. Come to me, call to me, and commit to me. Come, call, and commit. So, first of all, Jesus says, come to me. Come to me. Look at verse 35.

Jesus said to them, I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst. But I said to you that you have seen me, and yet do not believe. All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. Now, as we resume our study in John's gospel, we pick up just where we left off in John chapter 6, we considered the first half of this chapter. When we considered it, we discovered that bread is an important theme in this chapter, because all the events that took place in this chapter, they did so during the feast of Passover, or as the Jews used to call it, the feast of unleavened bread. And you remember, it was bread from the lunchbox of a little boy, which Jesus broke, and he fed the 5,000, where he took that five loaves of bread and two fish, and he fed 5,000 people. Or if you added the women and children present, it was probably 25,000 people. But it was a remarkable miracle in which Jesus demonstrated his care, his compassion, and his concern for both the temporal and spiritual needs of his community. And he did it all using bread. But of course, it was all for a purpose, because as the crowds followed Jesus, they wanted more satisfaction, they wanted more bread. And Jesus explained to them that they'll never be satisfied until they taste the true bread which has come down from heaven. And as Jesus said, as we read in verse 33, the bread of God is not a portion, it's a portion. He's the one who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world. And so the crowds, they're still confused as to what Jesus is saying. So they say to him, sir, give us this bread. But Jesus says to them, I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst. And then he goes on to say in verse 37, all that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out.

And you know, what ought to stand out from these verses is that Jesus says that in order to possess eternal life, you must come to him. He says, I am the bread of life. Whosoever comes to me will never hunger. All that the Father gives me will come to me. And whosoever comes to me, he says, I will never cast out. And so, my friend, what Jesus is saying to you this morning is that if you want to possess the one thing needful, if you want to possess eternal life, Jesus says, then come to me. Come to me.

Come to me with your sin. Come to me with your scars. Come to me with your sickness. Come to me with your suffering. Come to me with your sorrows. Jesus says, come to me. Come to me on bended knee. Come to me with your head bowed and your hand outstretched. Come to me. Come to me in your ruin, in need of a remedy. Come to me confessing your chaos and your need of a cure. Come to me confessing your sin and your ultimate need of salvation. You know, my friend, Jesus says to you this morning, come to me, come to me. Because whosoever comes to me, I will never cast out. Come to me. You know, it's a divine imperative. It's a divine imperative. But as Jesus explains, this divine imperative exists because of a divine initiative. This divine imperative exists because of a divine initiative.

[ 8 : 26 ] Jesus says, Jesus says, Jesus says, all that the Father gives me will come to me. And whoever comes to me, I will never cast out. The divine imperative exists because of a divine initiative. So Jesus, he can only say to you, come to me because of all that the Father has given to him. Literally, Jesus is saying in verse 37, all whom the Father has entrusted to me will come to me. All whom the Father has elected for me will come to me. So Jesus, he sets before us the doctrine of election. There's no hiding that fact. But notice, Jesus, he doesn't hide the doctrine of election because he presents the truth of the gospel as it really is. And the truth of the gospel is that the doctrine of election, it's all of grace. Do you know the fact that sinners whom God the Father has elected and chosen from before the foundation of the world, the fact that sinners can be saved is all of grace. The Lord says, I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious. I will have mercy upon whom I will have mercy. And you know, we might be tempted to ask, and maybe you've asked this question yourself, why doesn't the Lord save everyone?

But you know what we all, the question we should always start with, or the statement we should always think about is, the truth is the Lord didn't have to save anyone. In fact, the Lord was under no obligation to save anyone, to save any of us. Because as the Bible repeatedly reminds us again and again, we have all sinned and come short of the glory of God. We were all conceived in guiltiness and sin. We were all born dead in sin, in the darkness of sin, and in the dungeon of sin. We have rebelled against God. We sinned against God. We transgressed God's law. We broke his word. We missed the mark. Our catechism reminds us all mankind by their fall, lost communion with God. We are under his wrath and curse. We're so made liable to all the miseries of this life, to death itself, and to the pains of hell forever. Therefore, what the gospel says to us, first of all, is that we don't deserve to be saved. We have no right to be saved. We're not worthy to be saved. We have no claim on God to be saved whatsoever, because we all deserve to be cast into hell for all eternity. That's our starting point. But, you know, the wonder of wonders and the glory of the gospel is that the Lord didn't leave us in our estate of sin and misery, because out of his grace and out of his mercy and out of his love for lost sinners, God elected some to eternal life. And as John says at the outset of his gospel, in his prologue, the opening verses, he says that sinners come to possess eternal life. Sinners are born again, he says, not of blood, not of the will of the flesh, not of the will of man, but of God.

In other words, he says, you're not a Christian because your parents or your grandparents are or were Christians. He says, you're not a Christian because you read your Bible every day, or you attend church, or you keep the Sabbath, or you live your life as a good person. He says, you're not a Christian because you woke up one morning and thought, well, I want to be a Christian today. No, he says, you're a Christian only because God the Father elected and entrusted you to his Son, Jesus Christ. And Jesus Christ, as you know, he died on the cross to take away your sin, and he rose from the tomb on the third day to give you the promise of possessing eternal life. You know, my friend, Jesus, he doesn't hide behind the doctrine of election. He doesn't hide the fact that there is an elect. Jesus doesn't hide behind the doctrine of election, as so many people do. You know, there are so many people who say to me, in this community and in other communities, if I'm going to be saved, I'll be saved.

There's nothing I can do about it. But you know what Jesus is actually teaching us here, is that there is something you can do about it. Because the divine initiative and the divine imperative, he says very clearly, they're not in conflict with one another. God's sovereignty and human responsibility, they're not a contradiction. Jesus isn't confusing the gospel when he says in verse 37, all that the Father gives me will come to me, and whosoever comes to me I will never cast out.

Do you know what Jesus is actually presenting to us is what we have nicknamed over the years as Calvinism. Well, we could say Jesus was a Calvinist. He presented the truth of God's sovereignty and human responsibility, and he explained it's not a conflict. It's not contradictory.

[ 13 : 55 ] It's not confusing. In fact, when Spurgeon was asked, how do you reconcile God's sovereignty and human responsibility? He replied by saying, I never have to reconcile friends. God's sovereignty and human responsibility, he says, they've never had a falling out with one another. I do not need to reconcile what God has joined together. Where these two truths meet, says Spurgeon, I do not know, nor do I want to know. They do not puzzle me since I have given up my mind to believing them both. In other words, he says, the divine initiative of grace and the divine imperative of the gospel, they're not a mistake.

They're a mystery. The divine initiative of grace and the divine imperative of the gospel is not a mistake. It's a mystery. All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. Then he says in verse 38, for I have come down from heaven not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. You know, my friend, this is the mystery of salvation. But I want to be clear. It's a mystery where we need to let God be God, and that we need to remember that we are all sinners in need of a Savior. And the glory of the gospel is that Jesus is saying to us this morning, come to me. Come to me, because all whom the Father has elected and entrusted to me will be saved, and not one of them, he says, will be lost. Verse 40, for this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. Do you know, my friend, the Bible says that God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance? Therefore, what really matters is not our temporal possessions. Jesus is reminding us about the great eternity that is before us, and that we need to have an eternal possession, and that what really matters is that we listen to him about the importance of possessing eternal life, because he's saying to us very simply, come to me, and then call to me.

Call to me. That's what we see secondly. Call to me, he says. Verse 41. So the Jews grumbled about him, because he said, I am the bread that came down from heaven. They said, is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does he now say, I have come down from heaven? Jesus answered them, do not grumble among yourselves. No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up on the last day. Do you know, when the crowds listened to Jesus speak, they grumbled, because he had said he was the bread of life. And they said to one another, is this not the son of Mary and Joseph, whom we know? Is this not the carpenter's son? Is this not the boy from Nazareth? How does this Jesus now say that he's come down from heaven? But you know, what we ought to notice is that Jesus doesn't answer any of their questions. He just brings it back to what he was talking about. He talks about what really matters, possessing eternal life. He says in verse 44, no one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up on the last day. You know, Jesus, he continues by explaining this friendship that exists between the divine initiative of grace and the divine imperative of the gospel. Because as we said, the divine imperative of the gospel is where Jesus says to us all, come to me. But as Jesus explains here in verse 44, no one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. No one can come and submit to the divine imperative, the divine initiative of the gospel unless there is first of all the divine initiative of grace. So no one can come to me saying, unless they're drawn to me. No one can come unless they're drawn, because the will of the Father is that those who have been elected and entrusted to the Son from before the foundation of the world, they will be saved. None will be lost. And you know, what Jesus is actually saying, it should remind everyone of the confidence they should have when sharing the gospel. What Jesus is saying here is the reason why he had confidence in his mission to save sinners. That's why every preacher should also have confidence when preaching the gospel. It's why every Christian should have confidence when they speak about Jesus or the gospel to those who are still unconverted. Our confidence, my friend, is in the Father's will. Our confidence is in the Father's will.

And you know, this is something that's repeated throughout this passage, the Father's will. Look back at verse 37. He says, all that the Father gives to me will come to me. And whosoever comes to me, I will never cast out. I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me. This is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. And then verse 44. No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up on the last day. Our confidence is in God's will.

No one can come to me unless they are drawn to me. But you know, my friend, let's make this a bit more personal, shall we? Make it a bit more personal. Do you know, as a sinner, you are irresistibly drawn to Jesus by the work of the Holy Spirit, working through the Word of God. Because when the Holy Spirit begins to work in your heart and in your life, he draws you to Jesus. It's not that you're dragged kicking and screaming into the kingdom. You're not dragged against your will. You are irresistibly drawn by God's grace. And for some, they're drawn suddenly. For others, they're—for most people, they're drawn gradually. But either way, you're irresistibly drawn by God's grace. Your heart that was once cold and hardened, it's warmed and melted by the gospel. And you're brought to realize that the

[ 21 : 05 ] Lord is speaking to you. And he's speaking to you personally. He's speaking to you particularly. And he's speaking into your very situation and circumstances. Now, it's not that the preacher knows what's going on in your heart or in your life. It's that the Lord knows what's going on in your heart and in your life. And the Lord is speaking to you, and the Lord is drawing you to Himself.

And it's as the Lord lovingly draws you to Himself, He renews your will. He makes you willing to embrace Him and to trust Him with all your heart. And you know, actually, what Jesus is teaching us here in verse 44 is what we often refer to as effectual calling. Do you know, when I was a child in Sunday school, I was never good at remembering my memory verses, not like the children in our Sunday school.

But like them and like many others before me and after me, I had to memorize the catechism. But ironically, the question that I always got stuck on was question 31, what is effectual calling?

And you know, it wasn't until I was effectually called that I learned this catechism and memorized this catechism and even understood what this catechism taught. Because question 31 in the catechism asks, what is effectual calling? Or to make it more personal to you, how do I know that the Lord is working in my heart? How do I know that I'm being drawn to Jesus?

And the catechism says, effectual calling is the work of God's Holy Spirit, whereby He convinces us of our sin and misery. He enlightens our minds in the knowledge of Christ. He renews our will, and He persuades us and He enables us to embrace Jesus Christ as He's freely offered to us in the gospel. It's a wonderful catechism. Effectual calling is the work of God's Spirit, whereby He convinces us of our sin. He makes us see that we're a sinner. But more than that, He enlightens our mind in the knowledge of Christ that He's the Savior for our sin. And He renews our will. He makes us willing. He makes us want to follow Jesus. And He persuades us that the only way I'm going to be saved is by following Jesus. And then He enables me to start following Jesus by embracing Jesus and trusting in Jesus as He's freely offered to me on the pages of Scripture and in church on a Sunday morning through the gospel. You know, it's a wonderful reminder of what God does in our heart. He draws us to Jesus. He draws us to Jesus. But, you know, I want to be clear.

[ 23 : 53 ] God's sovereignty and salvation doesn't take away our responsibility in salvation. God's sovereignty and salvation—we're seeing both this morning—God's sovereignty and salvation doesn't take away our responsibility in salvation. We have to call on Jesus.

You know, as my good friend J.C. Ryle, I wish I'd met him as a preacher or heard him as a preacher. He said about God's sovereignty and human responsibility in salvation, he said, these things, no doubt, are deep and mysterious. But one thing is abundantly clear, he says.

Man is responsible for his own soul. His inability to come to Christ does not make an end of his accountableness. If lost at last, it will prove to have been his own fault. His blood will be on his own head. Christ would have saved him, but he would not be saved. He would not come to Christ that he might have life. The great point we have to consider, says Ryle, is whether we believe. What shall it profit us that Christ has died for sinners if we do not believe on him? Dear my friend, God's sovereignty in salvation. It doesn't take away your responsibility in salvation, because your responsibility is to call to Jesus. Your responsibility is to call to Jesus. It's not to wait for the right moment, or to wait for the right Bible text, or to wait for the time to your good enough, or to wait for the bright light, or to wait for the right moment. No, your responsibility now and today is to call to Jesus. That's your responsibility. And you know, this is what Jesus emphasizes. He says in verse 45, it is written in the prophets, and they will all be taught by God. Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me. Jesus quotes a verse from Isaiah 54, which shows us that it's your responsibility to come to Jesus and call to Jesus. Why? Because you've heard the message of salvation. Therefore, you are without excuse. You're without excuse. You've heard the gospel. You've been brought up in the gospel. You've been taught the gospel. You've seen the gospel at work in the lives of others, others in your home, and in your family, in your community. My friend, you know, you know this morning that Jesus is the bread of life who's come down from heaven. You know that Jesus is the good shepherd who gave his life for the sheep.

You know that Jesus is the Savior of sinners. You know that Jesus is able to be your Savior. You know the good news of the gospel. Therefore, you must respond to the gospel. You must call to Jesus for salvation, because the great promise of salvation is that whosoever calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved. Whosoever calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved. Therefore, your responsibility is to call to Jesus. You're to call to Jesus, which leads us to the last instruction that Jesus gives about possessing eternal life. You need to commit to Jesus. Because, you know, my friend, as we... Jesus is presenting us this morning, He's saying what really matters is not your temporal possessions, but that we have an eternal possession, that we possess eternal life. That's what it's all about.

That's what it's all about. Jesus says, come to me, call to me, and commit to me. Commit to me. He says in verse 52, then the Jews disputed among themselves, saying, how can this man give us his flesh to eat? So Jesus said to them, truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. And, you know, in this chapter, we see the progression and the reaction of the crowds. There's this progression and the reaction towards Jesus.

[ 28 : 40 ] Because at the beginning of the chapter, we see that they're following Jesus. Then they start questioning Jesus. Then they begin to grumble against Jesus. And now they're disputing what Jesus said. How can this man give us his flesh to eat? Now, this statement of Jesus has undoubtedly caused a lot of discussion and debate over the years. Because why would Jesus ask us to eat his flesh and drink his blood in order to have eternal life? Is that not a bit shocking? Maybe even a bit sickening. Or could we say that, well, Jesus is referring to communion? Because Jesus, he's already said that he is the bread of life. And when Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper, he used bread and wine as symbols of his body and his blood. And you'll remember that on the night that Jesus was betrayed, he took bread and he said, this is my body which is broken for you. Do this in remembrance of me.

And then he took the cup of wine and he said, this cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me. For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. So is Jesus talking about communion?

But you know, the thing is, when Jesus said, unless you eat my flesh and drink my blood, you have no life in you. Do you know, he wasn't referring to communion. Although for generations, the Roman Catholic Church has used this text as an argument for their view of the Lord's Supper, of transubstantiation, a view which believes that the wafer and the wine during the Roman Catholic Mass, they literally become the body and the blood of Jesus Christ. But you know, that's why the Roman Catholic Church is so misleading. Because they're telling people, as Jesus is saying here, they're telling people that by partaking of the Mass, they're eating the flesh and drinking the blood of Jesus Christ. And by doing so, quoting Jesus' words, they possess eternal life.

So they say, if you take the Mass, you have eternal life, whether or not you come, call, or commit your life to Jesus Christ. But of course, that's not true. Because in this passage, Jesus isn't speaking about communion. He's speaking about the cross. He's speaking about obediently submitting His flesh over to the hands of violent men, where He will be mocked and beaten and flogged and crucified.

That's what Jesus is talking about. Jesus is speaking about this time, a year from this point, where His blood is going to be shed for the redemption and cleansing of all those who have been elected and entrusted to Him by His Father. Jesus isn't speaking about communion. He's speaking about the cross. He's talking about His suffering and death. And what Jesus is saying is, unless you feed on the finished work of the cross, you'll never possess eternal life. Unless you come to Me, you'll never possess eternal life. Unless you call to Me, you'll never possess eternal life. Unless you commit to Me, you'll never possess eternal life. More than that, unless you confess Me, you will never possess eternal life. And you know, this is something Jesus has repeatedly emphasized throughout this passage. Because possessing eternal life is what it means to be raised up, on the last day. I don't know if you've noticed, but Jesus has repeatedly used a phrase all the way through this section. I will raise Him up on the last day. Jesus said in verse 39, and this is the will of Him who sent Me, that I should lose nothing of all that He has given Me, but raise it up on the last day. Verse 40, this is the will of My Father, that everyone who looks on the

[ 33 : 01 ] Son believes in Him, and should have eternal life, and I will raise Him up on the last day. Then verse 44, no one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him, and I will raise Him up on the last day.

Then verse 54, whoever feeds on My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise Him up on the last day. Four times Jesus emphasized that being raised up on the last day is what it means to possess eternal life. Because you know, my friend, when it all boils down to this, because on the day of judgment, Jesus is saying that when all the graves are opened, you will be raised up on the last day, and you will be openly acknowledged and acquitted on the day of judgment only because you possess eternal life. And as you know, my friend, if you were watching the news last night, there have now been over 80,000 deaths due to this pandemic that we're facing.

But there have been much more besides. Many in our community, many in our island, many in our country. And you know, with each one, each death is a reminder to us of what really matters in life.

It's not our temporal possessions, but that you have this eternal possession, that you possess eternal life.

You need to possess eternal life, my friend. And this morning, Jesus has instructed you very clearly on how to possess eternal life. He says, come to me. He says, call to me. And he says, commit your life to me. Confess me as your Lord and Savior, and you will receive the possession and the promise of eternal life. Don't get caught up with the doctrine of election. Let God be God with that. You do what Jesus is saying to you. Come to me. Call to me.

[ 35 : 27 ] And commit your life to me. Come, call, commit. Well, may the Lord bless these thoughts to us.

Now, let us pray together. O Lord, our gracious God, we give thanks to Thee for the gospel, that there is a gospel at all, that there is good news in the midst of the sin and suffering of this world, that the good news is that Jesus Christ came into this world to seek and to save the lost.

And we give thanks that he is passing by in the gospel this morning, that he is calling us to come to him. He is calling us to call out to him. He is calling us to commit our lives to him, to follow him.

Because as the shepherd assures us, that if we follow him, he will follow us. He will follow behind us and watch over us and keep us. Because his promise is that goodness and mercy all my life shall surely follow me. And in God's house forevermore, my dwelling place shall be. Lord, bless us, we pray. Bless thy word to our souls. O Lord, speak to us, we plead.

And go before us for Jesus' sake. Amen. We're going to bring our service to a conclusion this morning by considering the words of Psalm 61.

[ 36 : 57 ] Psalm 61 in the Sing Psalms version on page 78. Psalm 61. We're considering the words of verses 1.

to 5. And as you can see, these words are David's cry to God. He wants to be led to the rock. Who is the rock but Jesus? What better prayer to have than to be led to Jesus?

O hear my urgent cry, my God, and listen to my plea. From earth's remotest bounds I call, when my heart faints in me. When my heart faints in me. O God, conduct me to the rock that's higher far than I.

For you're my refuge from the foe, my tower of strength on high. Down to the verse marked five. To God's praise. O hear my urgent cry, my God, and listen to my plea.

From earth's remotest bounds I call, when my heart faints in me.

[ 38 : 24 ] O God, conduct me to the rock that's higher far than I.

For you're my refuge from the foe, my tower of strength on high.

O let me dwell within your tent, forever there to lay.

O for the shelter of your wings, the refuge raise me here.

For you have heard my curse, O God, and you have given me.

[ 39 : 51 ] The heritage of those who fear your name continually.

We'll stand for the benediction. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, both now and forevermore.

Amen.