

You think you have eternal life?

John 5:39-42 reads, “You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life. I do not receive honor from men. But I know you, that you do not have the love of God in you.” These are the words of Jesus our savior. This is one of many places that identify love as a main ingredient to eternal life. To approach the scriptures from this point of view, many passages need to be explained and understood. For now let’s keep with this main theme of love. In Luke 10:25, a lawyer asked Jesus, “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” He said to him, “what is written in the law? What is your reading of it?” So he answered and said, “you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.” And He said to him, “You have answered rightly; do this and you will live.” Instead of trying to cross examine all of the different interpretations of this passage let me just state two facts. Hebrews 11:6 says, “But without faith it is impossible to please Him...” and Galatians 5:6 tells us, “...but faith works through love.” It appears that faith and love go together. Jesus states in John 3:36, “He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.” He also tells the lawyer in Luke 10 that love will give him life. It looks like Jesus is teaching this also. At the end of 1Corinthians in 15:22 Paul states, “If anyone does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed. The Lord is coming.” Certainly you must believe in Jesus to love Him and certainly you can believe in Him without loving Him, right? In John 17:3 we find a similar understanding: “And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.” Belief comes first and how could you know God and not love Him? Again, you could believe and not know just like you can meet someone and not know them.

There are many scriptures that command us to love. The question is, is love really love if it is only obeyed as a command instead of coming from the heart. Does anyone want their spouse to love them because they are commanded to? I think not. Now, there are also many scriptures that plead with us to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. We have to conclude the reason for this is because it is only through Jesus Christ will we find the love of God. Which is why Jesus asked the question, “do you think you have life?” Of course, the New Testament is all about the love of God through Jesus Christ. What I am trying to get you to see is that love is the end product of what God is trying to put in us, not belief for salvation. Salvation is only the beginning

of the journey. First we are reconciled to God, then He begins to form in us a new heart.

This is where the New Covenant comes into play. It says God will write the law into our hearts and minds, Hebrews 8:10. Summed up this means that the commands to love God and our neighbor will be written in our hearts. This is done so that we will love from the heart and not by command. A child will obey the will of the parent because he is commanded. A son or daughter will do the will of the parents because of love. This is the end product to be created in the image of Christ. Jesus did the will of the Father because of love.

Let’s look at a couple more passages. John 5:24, “Indeed, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.” Here the Lord tells us there is life for those who believe. 1John 3:14 explains, “We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death.” Here we have an apparent contradiction. Which is it, faith or love that gives us eternal life? The answer has to be both. This is why the book of James was written; the first four chapters are all about hypocrisy explaining to us that if we don’t live and do what we believe we are hypocrites. The scripture do inform us that God does not think very highly of hypocrites. Even Jesus tells us in Matthew 6 that unless we forgive we will not be forgiven. Our salvation is based on forgiveness; and we are told that there is a chance that our debt could be put back on us. Read the parable of the unforgiving servant: Matthew 18:21-35. Surely the answer to all of this is that as we grow in the Lord we become accountable to the things we believe and understand, see Luke 12:48. A new born baby has no accountability in a family but is served by the parents and siblings. As the child grows he is taught responsibility and is held accountable. Grace is supposed to teach us to love: Titus 2:11-12. God will not be mocked; we shouldn’t think we can use His grace like a rug. This is why we must press into the New Covenant and learn His ways and walk in them. The verse that we love to quote so much from 1John chapter 1 that “He is faithful and just to forgive our sins” does have a condition; we need to be walking in the light. The light is the understanding God has given us.