

Redeemer OPC, Hawaii

Adult Sunday School

The Apostles' Creed (14)

“Twelfth Article - The Life Everlasting”

- I. Introduction. Review: We last looked at the eleventh article dealing with the resurrection of the body. It follows immediately after “the forgiveness of sins” even though there are a number of things that do happen between: the imputation of Christ’s righteousness to us through faith, which is part of that same justification by which we have forgiveness of sins; adoption; and especially from our linear, time-bound point of view, an entire Christian life of sanctification; and the first part of glorification, the intermediate state after death of the soul in heaven in Christ’s presence and the body, being still united to Christ, sleeping peacefully in the grave until the resurrection of the body. Why does the creed leave all of that out? We found that “the forgiveness of sins,” because it is foundational to all of that, serves as a sort of shorthand for the entirety of what happens from the moment of God’s saving us all the way up to the resurrection of the body. We also looked into the certainty of the resurrection of the body because it is one of the essential doctrines of the gospel that is constantly under attack, from the individual unbeliever to whom we witness who scoffs at it, to the culture that tries to deny it with atheistic doctrines such as evolution, to other religions that deny it with different versions of the afterlife, even to liberal theology’s so-called Christianity that has turned it into a “spiritual” resurrection rather than a bodily one—even to the point that some simply say that those who have died will always “live in our hearts.” We brought forth many Scripture texts and Biblical arguments to prove from the Scriptures the truth of the bodily resurrection and glorification of Christ’s people. Then we also looked at the Object and Manner of the Resurrection, and a couple of lessons to draw from it all. Now, we examine the twelfth article of the Apostles’ Creed, “[I believe in] the

life everlasting. Amen.”

II. The Definition of Life Everlasting.

A. What It Is Not.

1. It is NOT simply eternal existence. It is not eternal existence in the condition we are now in. We live in a sin-cursed world that cannot be the desire or hope of the Christian in which to go on eternally. Our desire and hope is to be rid of the curse and of sin forever. Those in hell will have eternal existence while suffering what the Bible also describes as eternal death.
2. It is NOT eternal existence without the prospect of punishment for the wicked. The Bible does not teach universalism.

B. What It Is.

1. It is eternal life. It is eternity with happiness completed, where happiness is absolute contentment, satisfaction, joy, and blessing. Witsius: “The Life Everlasting is a most blessed state of the whole man, in which he rejoices in the immediate presence, the contemplation, and the glorious enjoyment of God in heaven, and is thus conformed to Him as far as possible, in both soul and body, without the least interruption or diminution of his happiness to all eternity.”
2. It is the consummation of all the Christian’s hope. Thus, it follows upon “the resurrection from the dead.” It brings happiness beyond what we can ask, think, or understand, in God, without end or limit. It brings that happiness for the sake of Christ’s merits and sacrifice, given to those who by God’s grace trust in Christ and show evidence of their faith in Him by Spirit-wrought good works.
3. Phil. 2:8-11. Our exaltation rests on Christ’s, which He has as a reward for

His humiliation and the finishing of the work that the Father sent Him into the world to do in saving the elect.

- III. The Precursor: the First-Fruits of Bliss in This Life. We have current manifestations of God's presence and glory: the Word, prayer, and meditation. We also have experiences of His goodness and love such as answered prayer and kind providences, affecting us with His love, power, protection, wisdom, and all-sufficiency so that we enjoy God as our portion and delight, peace of conscience and mind, and assurance of the consummate happiness in due time. All of this results in "joy unspeakable and full of glory."
- IV. The Intermediate State. This is after the death of the body, but before the resurrection, when our soul is in glory in the immediate presence of Christ, but our body, being still united to Christ, sleeps in the grave until the day of the resurrection.
 - A. No "Soul Sleep." The Bible disproves this false doctrine because it teaches the doctrine stated above that is summarized in the Westminster Shorter Catechism. 2 Cor. 5:1-8 makes it clear that when the Christian dies, he will be immediately with Christ because he is either at home in the body and absent from the Lord, or absent from the body and at home with the Lord. There is no time between the two.
 - B. The Soul Is Conscious. The soul is the seat of the intellect, will, and emotions of man. So the soul lives, understands, and feels while it is in the heavenly place and joys (Heb. 12:22-24).
 - C. The Blessedness is Enjoyment of God. The blessedness we enjoy in heaven during the intermediate state, according to Scripture, as far as it has been revealed, is enjoyment of the presence of God and Christ in glory. We will behold the glory of God in His works of glory in heaven which surpass His works in nature and in the church militant. The blessedness is in beholding the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, enjoying Him and knowing Him immediately and without hindrance; i.e., "no

longer as in a mirror dimly, but then face to face.” We will not know Him exhaustively; in His infinity, that will be impossible. We will continue to learn of Him throughout eternity; but what we know of Him, we will know perfectly. The blessedness is in the fact that we will have perfect love for God and delight in Him as the fulfillment of all our longings, and the satisfaction of all our desires. The blessedness is in conformity to God in holiness and glory with perfect communion and intimacy with Him. The blessedness is in the fulness of Him.

V. The Final Glorious State of Eternal Life.

A. The Life.

1. Our hope will be increased and completed at the last day, over and above the intermediate state, because it will be consummated in body and soul.
2. We will witness the glorious works of God in renewing heaven and earth together with the assembly of the glorified elect (Rom. 8; 2 Pet. 2).
3. We will experience a more perfect and immediate enjoyment of God, with no effects of sin remaining in body or soul.

B. Everlasting.

1. Forever capable of enjoying life in glory. Its blessedness is never removed or abated. Our chief Good will be permanent. Our minds will never be in distress because there will be no possibility of losing our chief Good. We have the assurance of the preservation of the saints now, but then we will have the consummation of it.
2. The promises are freely given in Christ. Rom. 6:23.
3. With such promises, the gospel doctrine cannot be anything other than divine in origin. (READ Witsius, pp. 473-74.)
4. We, therefore, should shake ourselves free from any spiritual sloth, to make

our calling and election sure, and be sure that God's promise of everlasting life is ours.