

THIS IS THE LIFE!

ENJOYING THE
BLESSINGS AND PRIVILEGES
OF FAITH IN CHRIST

WARREN W. WIERSBE



BakerBooks

a division of Baker Publishing Group
Grand Rapids, Michigan

Warren W. Wiersbe, *This is the Life!*
Baker Books, a division of Baker Publishing Group, © 2014. Used by permission.

(Unpublished manuscript—copyright protected Baker Publishing Group)

© 2014 by ScripTex, Inc.

Published by Baker Books
a division of Baker Publishing Group
P.O. Box 6287, Grand Rapids, MI 49516-6287
www.bakerbooks.com

Printed in the United States of America

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—for example, electronic, photocopy, recording—without the prior written permission of the publisher. The only exception is brief quotations in printed reviews.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data is on file at the Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

978-0-8010-1651-6

Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the New King James Version. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations labeled NLT are from the *Holy Bible*, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2007 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations labeled NIV are from the Holy Bible, New International Version®. NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. www.zondervan.com

Scripture quotations labeled NRSV are from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyright © 1989, by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations labeled TNIV are from the Holy Bible, Today's New International Version®. TNIV®. Copyright © 2001, 2005 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. www.zondervan.com

14 15 16 17 18 19 20 7 6 5 4 3 2 1



Warren W. Wiersbe, *This is the Life!*
Baker Books, a division of Baker Publishing Group, © 2014. Used by permission.

(Unpublished manuscript—copyright protected Baker Publishing Group)

Contents

Preface 7

1. Eternal Life 11
2. A Trusting Life 17
3. An Obedient Life 29
4. A Victorious Life 38
5. A Joyful Life 47
6. A Wise Life 61
7. A Transparent Life 70
8. A Forgiving Life 79
9. A Fruitful Life 90
10. An Exchanged Life 98
11. A Sufficient Life 107
12. A Fragrant Life 114
13. A Quiet and Peaceable Life 123
14. A Life of Freedom 132
15. Saints Alive! 140

Warren W. Wiersbe, *This is the Life!*
Baker Books, a division of Baker Publishing Group, © 2014. Used by permission.

(Unpublished manuscript—copyright protected Baker Publishing Group)

Preface

“*What Is Your Life . . . ?*” (*James 4:14*)

One of my favorite magazine cartoons shows two cows in a pasture, looking over the fence at the traffic going by on the highway. A milk truck is passing, displaying these words on the side panel: “Johnson’s Milk—Pasteurized—Homogenized—Vitamins C and D Added.” One cow says to the other one, “Sort of makes you feel inadequate, doesn’t it?” After hearing many negative sermons and reading many critical book chapters and magazine articles, I get that same bovine feeling, and I wonder why somebody doesn’t start accentuating the positive and telling God’s people what a great and wonderful life we have as Christians.

But not everybody has a positive view of life. Jewish writer Shalom Aleichem (who gave us Tevye the milkman in *Fiddler on the Roof*) said that life was “a blister on top of a tumor, and a boil on top of that.” James M. Barrie, who wrote *Peter Pan*, said that life was “a long lesson in humility,” and American poet Carl Sandburg compared life to an onion: “You peel it off one layer at a time, and sometimes you weep.” Famous trial lawyer Clarence

Darrow called life “a span of time in which the first half is ruined by our parents and the second half by our children.”

The Bible doesn’t deny that life has its battles and burdens as well as its blessings. Some of the writers of Scripture see life as a refiner’s furnace (Job 23:10), a violent storm (Ps. 42:7), a battle (2 Tim. 2:3), or a difficult race to run (Jer. 12:5). Not only do these writers tell us that life is difficult but they also warn us that life is brief and fragile. When the Lord gave Adam life, He “breathed into his nostrils the breath of life” (Gen. 2:7), and breath has always been associated with brevity and weakness. “Everyone is but a breath,” wrote David, “even those who seem secure” (Ps. 39:5 NIV). “What is your life?” asked James. “You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes” (4:14 NRSV). Human life began with a breath, it continues with our breathing, and will end in a moment when we breathe our last. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were important and powerful people, but all three “breathed their last” (Gen. 25:8; 35:29; 49:33) and it may be our turn sooner than we expect.

Difficult circumstances we can’t always control also contribute to the problems and demands of life, and from ancient days, people have complained about “the times.” David lamented in Psalm 11 that all the foundations of life had been destroyed (v. 3) and in Psalm 12 that faithful men and women had vanished from the earth (vv. 1–2). On March 23, 1783, British writer Samuel Johnson said to his friend James Boswell, “I have lived to see things all as bad as they can be.” About that same time, Thomas Jefferson wrote in his *Notes on the State of Virginia*, “Indeed, I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just.” Playwright George Bernard Shaw complained, “If the other planets are inhabited, they’re using earth as their insane asylum.”



So much for the depressing outlooks on life. The heart of every problem is the problem in the heart, and only our Lord can change

the human heart. This book is about the kind of life God wants to give us and how we can receive it through His grace and power. The habits that bind us, the negative attitudes that depress us, the people who bother us, the needs that worry us, and the challenges that frighten us can all be creatively handled by the Lord if we will let Him have His way.

Read and digest the first chapter and be sure of your relationship with the Lord. Then read the table of contents and decide which chapter or chapters best describe your current situation. Start reading there. Each of the chapters is a complete unit, so the choices are yours. Please don't speed-read the chapters but instead read them as if you and I were privately and calmly discussing each one with open Bibles before us. Take time to ponder and pray, and give the Lord opportunity to teach (or remind) you of what you need to know at this time. When I cite Scripture verses that I don't quote, please keep your Bible handy to look up each reference and read it carefully.

Finally, ask the Lord to help you put into practice the principles you are learning. Our obedience turns words into works, and that's the best way to experience spiritual growth. Learning that ignores real living produces a big head but a cold heart and a weak will. Paul warns us that "knowledge puffs up while love builds up" (1 Cor. 8:1 NIV).

"Your words were found, and I ate them, and Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart, for I am called by Your name, O LORD God of hosts" (Jer. 15:16).

Warren W. Wiersbe

Warren W. Wiersbe, *This is the Life!*
Baker Books, a division of Baker Publishing Group, © 2014. Used by permission.

(Unpublished manuscript—copyright protected Baker Publishing Group)



1

Eternal Life

There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, “Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him.” Jesus answered and said to him, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

John 3:1–3

Read John 3:1–21. Nicodemus was a member of the Jewish ruling council. Jesus called him Israel’s teacher (v. 10), so he must have had a good knowledge of the Scriptures. He appears to be a wealthy man as well as a religious man. Born a Jew, he was a member of the only nation God ever called His chosen people and His “special treasure” (Deut. 7:6). He sought to know the truth and from his heart wanted to love and obey the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Nicodemus was a man of character and courage, and yet he knew that something was lacking in his life. He went to get help from Jesus, and the Master told him what was missing: “You

must be born again” (John 3:7 NIV). Nicodemus didn’t know there was such a thing as a “new birth” and a new beginning in life. The physical blessings we now enjoy came with our physical birth, and if we want spiritual blessings we must experience a spiritual birth. We must receive eternal life.

Eternal Life Is the Very Life of God

The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are eternal; they have neither beginning nor ending. Moses said to the Lord that He was “from everlasting to everlasting” (Ps. 90:2). Moses also called the Lord “the eternal God” (Deut. 33:27), and the prophet Isaiah called God “the High and Lofty One who inhabits eternity” (57:15). Paul addressed the Lord as “the King eternal” (1 Tim. 1:17). The life I have was imparted to me by my parents, but God has “life in Himself” (John 5:26) and that life is imparted to all who repent of their sins and trust Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord (John 10:27–28; Rom. 6:23).

From day to day and season to season, we are accustomed to seeing things and people around us come to an end, either suddenly or gradually, and we are overwhelmed by the very thoughts of eternity and living forever. In his book *The Knowledge of the Holy*, A. W. Tozer said of God’s eternity that “our hearts approve with gladness what our reason cannot fully comprehend.”¹ That anyone or anything should exist with neither beginning nor ending is something our limited minds cannot grasp. Eternity is “time out of mind,” and when the Lord created the first humans, He “put eternity in their hearts” (Eccl. 3:11). This explains why people like us, created in the image of God, have always craved something beyond the mundane things life offers us. Before we met Jesus, we often said to ourselves, “There must be something

1. A. W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1961), 44.

better!” Augustine was right when he wrote, “You have made us for Yourself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You.”

Eternal Life Is the Gift of God

The apostle John wrote of Jesus, “In Him was life, and the life was the light of men” (John 1:4). Jesus conquered death and darkness when on the cross He gave His life as a ransom for sin. “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” shouted John the Baptist (v. 29). “I am the good shepherd,” said Jesus. “The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep” (10:11). Throughout Israel’s history the sheep had died for the shepherds, but when Jesus came, the Shepherd died for the sheep! “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (3:16). That familiar verse is one of the first we memorized as children in Sunday School, but we had very little understanding of what it meant. It was just words. When a new father or mother holds their first child in their arms, then they begin to understand the Father’s love for Jesus *and for us!* According to John 17:23, the Father loves each of His children as much as He loves His own Son!

That Jesus would give His life for us and then, when we trusted Him, *give us His life*, is beyond comprehension. The apostle Paul summarized this miracle in four words: “Christ lives in me” (Gal. 2:20). When the Holy Spirit enters our inner being and takes control, everything changes! “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new” (2 Cor. 5:17). Your body becomes the temple of the Holy Spirit and the members of your body the tools the Spirit will use as He empowers you to serve the Lord and glorify Him (1 Cor. 6:19–20). You have a whole new outlook on life as well as a new set of values, and a new desire to serve God and others. The indwelling Spirit enables us to become more and more like Jesus in our

thinking (Phil. 2:5) and in our living (Gal. 2:20), and we experience days of heaven on earth because the life of heaven dwells within.

Eternal Life Empowers Us to Do the Will of God and Serve Him

Athletic skill ran in our family—until I came along, and then it ran out. When I was in grade school, I was the last boy chosen for every team. The team captains would argue and the loser would have to take me. When I got to middle school, I was usually on the sidelines, guarding the coats, books, and other possessions of the students playing on the field. I can recall times when I would be up to bat, wishing that Babe Ruth (this was a long time ago!) would enter my body and help me hit a home run. Little did I realize that Someone greater than Babe Ruth—the Holy Spirit of God—would take up residence in my body when I put my faith in Christ one evening at a Youth for Christ rally, and that He would endow me with all that I needed for living the Christian life. “His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness” (2 Pet. 1:3).

As I studied my Bible, read Christian books, and listened carefully to preaching and teaching, I began to understand that when the Holy Spirit came into my body, He baptized me into the body of Christ and gave me the spiritual gifts I needed for Christian living and service (1 Cor. 12:1–13). Then I discovered that there was also a filling of the Spirit. Baptism occurs only once but this filling is a repeated experience as we yield to the Lord. I knew that I had to adjust my internal life (thoughts, motives, imaginations, and so forth) to match my eternal life or I would be sinning against the Holy Spirit by lying to the Spirit (Acts 5:1–11), grieving the Spirit (Eph. 4:25–32), and quenching the Spirit (1 Thess. 5:19). It was encouraging and exciting to learn that I was never without divine help as long as I was “walking in the Spirit” and “living in the Spirit” (Gal. 5:16–26). I didn’t need Babe Ruth!

You and I may confidently rest on the words Jesus said to His disciples: “And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever” (John 14:16). In the original Greek text, the word translated *another* means “another of the same kind.” He was speaking, of course, about the Holy Spirit of God, and affirming that the Spirit would minister to the disciples just as He had ministered to them. The Spirit is our Helper just as Jesus was the disciples’ Helper. In the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit came upon select people and helped them accomplish special tasks; but since Pentecost (Acts 2), the Spirit indwells every believer and helps them in their daily tasks as they serve the Lord. The word translated “Helper” (*paraclete*) means “one called to our side to help us.” It has also been translated Comforter, Counselor, and Advocate. Our English word *comfort* comes from the Latin and means “with strength,” and the word *advocate* refers to a lawyer who stands beside the accused to give professional help (Mark 13:11). The Holy Spirit does all of this and more for the people of God!

How do we “keep in step” with the Holy Spirit and not forfeit His marvelous ministry? First, we must spend quality time in the Scriptures, which the Holy Spirit wrote, allowing Him to show us Jesus and teach us all that we have in Him. Second, we must seek to glorify Jesus Christ in all that we say and do and with all that we have, for the ministry of the Spirit is not to glorify Himself or us but to glorify Jesus. Our Master said, “He [the Holy Spirit] will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you” (John 16:14). I recall hearing Dr. J. Sidlow Baxter preach on this verse and repeatedly say, “Whatever begins with the Holy Spirit will always end at Jesus Christ. He—the Spirit—shall glorify Me—the Savior.” If we want our work and walk to glorify Jesus and not ourselves, we must yield to the Spirit and allow Him to have His way. Like the first disciples, we must “give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word” (Acts 6:4).

Each of the following chapters describes some aspect of the Christian life that you can experience and enjoy, but unless what I

have written in this first chapter is true of your life, the successive chapters will mean very little to you. What Jesus said to Nicodemus, He says to us today: “You must be born again” (John 3:7). The first step in *living* the Christian life is *possessing* eternal life. “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 6:23). God’s promise is that “whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Acts 2:21).