

# Will Everyone Live Somewhere Forever?

## II Timothy 1:6-10

The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ—what Paul calls the Gospel in I Corinthians 15:1-4—bring life and immortality to light. Since Jesus rose from the dead, He has offered eternal life to those who will believe on Him. Contrary to the beliefs of the first century Greeks and Romans, eternal life is not a default possession of human beings from birth. As Paul writes in I Timothy 1:10 it is the Gospel that has brought life and immortality to light. Most Christian denominations today believe in an eternal hell, which would require every human being to be a possessor of immortality. **In this study, I endeavor to show the following:**

- The idea that every human possesses immortality has its roots in paganism;
- The Apostle Paul taught that only God possesses immortality, but believers can share in it because of the death and resurrection of Christ;
- In the church ages, pagan philosophy influenced church teaching to the degree that paganism distorted church doctrine, which also distorts people's perceptions of God;
- God restored the truth on eternal life and eternal death—as opposed to eternal torment—through the ministry of William Branham, in fulfillment of Malachi 4:5-6.

## The idea of eternal torment comes from paganism, not the Bible.

In the mythology of the Greeks and Romans, every person was immortal. After the death of the physical body, a person's spirit went to the kingdom of Hades, the god of the Underworld. If someone had lived a good life, then their spirit could drift through eternity doing the same kind of work they had performed in life. On the other hand, if someone had offended the gods in their life on earth, then they had a very difficult time of it in the Underworld. There is a story told of one Tityos who had attacked the goddess Leto. For his foolishness, he was sentenced to the Field of Punishment, where he was nailed to the ground. Every day, two vultures would pick and tear at his liver until they had eaten it up. At night, as Tityos sank into a tormented sleep, his liver was miraculously restored so that at dawn the two vultures could resume their grisly work, for all eternity.

This myth also gives us a window of insight into the character of the pagan gods. With the story of Tityos in mind, where the punishment lacks any kind of proportionality to the crimes committed, we see that the pagan gods are both unjust and also vengeful sadists.

The assumption of universal immortality is one of the areas in which pagan philosophy had the most influence over early Christian teaching.

According to church historian Jaroslav Pelikan in *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition*

“Two Christian doctrines are perhaps the most reliable indications of the continuing hold of Greek philosophy on Christian theology: the doctrine of the immortality of the soul and the doctrine of the absoluteness of God...” (51).

The Bible teaches a different view of immortality, with a very different view of God.

**God alone has immortality as a default characteristic.**

**I Timothy 6:14-16**

Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen.

**Yet God also graciously extends immortality to whosoever will believe on Him, regardless of how that person had previously offended him!**

**John 3:14-17**

And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up:

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.

For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

**Unlike the gods of the pagans, God gives *righteous* judgment, even over the lives of sinners. He is no sadist seeking eternal vengeance! Yet if He gave no judgment at all, He could not be considered righteous.**

**Romans 6:23**

For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Note: wrong teachings give a wrong picture of God!**

Teachings of early church leaders, such as Irenaeus and Tatian, align with biblical teaching on the mortality of the soul.

Irenaeus: "The soul participates in life because God wills it to live; thus it will not even have such participation when God no longer wills it to live."

Tatian: "In itself, the soul is not immortal, but mortal."

**Yet for most of church history (even until today), much of the church has taught the immortality of the soul, even in hell.**

From "You Will Love Somewhere Forever," by the Gospel Light Society

"As awful as death is to us, the truth is that those who die are not forever extinguished from existence. They simply pass from this life to another realm of life — a place where they still exist and are just as real, but a place where people in this world cannot see them. ... When we die, we pass from the physical realm into the spiritual realm. We still exist, but we are no longer tied to the physical world. Our souls then travel to face God where we will give an account of all that we have done in our physical lives. ... **After you die, you will be ushered into one of two places to spend eternity. What you do in this physical life will determine where you go.** In this life, you have the opportunity to choose whether or not you will go to Heaven or Hell."

The Bible doesn't speak of "living somewhere forever"; rather, the choice presented is between salvation and perishing, between life and death.

**I Corinthians 1:18**

For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.

**II Thessalonians 2:10**

And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

**Romans 6:17**

For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.

**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.

## Everlasting vs. Eternal

The words *aion* and *aionios* can both be translated as *forever, eternal, or everlasting*. But context is important to the interpretation. Only when *aion* or *aionios* is referring to God or His kingdom can they mean without beginning or ending. In contexts of punishments and dispensations, the Greek words refer to specific time periods.

### **Ephesians 1:21**

Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world [aion], but also in that which is to come:

### **II Timothy 4:10**

For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world [aion], and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia.

### **I Corinthians 2:7**

But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world [aion] unto our glory:

### **Matthew 13:40**

As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world [aion].

### **Jude 1:7**

Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal [aionios] fire.

### **Matthew 25:26**

And these shall go away into everlasting [aionios] punishment: but the righteous into life eternal [aionios].

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You might wonder now, when you can use that word, "eternal", and not use it the way we have been taught. That is easy. When it applies to God it means to be without beginning or end, and ever enduring and never ceasing. And when you talk of eternal life you have that in mind which is the life of God. "This is the record, that God has given us eternal life, and that life is in the Son. He that hath the Son hath life." Now then, only sons of God have life eternal, the kind that never had a beginning, but always was. That is right. You have something in you right now that is eternal--without beginning or end. It is the Spirit of God. It is a part of God Himself. It is the life of God.

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So you see, that word eternal, or everlasting, can be applied in various ways, but when it applies to God, He being what He is, it has one meaning. It is the duration of God. You can't apply it like that to any other thing. God alone is eternal, and because He lives, we live with Him.