

THE UPWARD CALL

*Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet;
but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,
I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God
IN CHRIST JESUS.*

(Philippians 3:13-14 NASB)

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Eonian-Aionian Life

This issue covers what could be called one of the main tenets of Christian doctrine, *eternal life*, except that I propose it is more rightly called *eonian life*, based on the concept of *ages* or *eons*. For more explanation of the word *eonian*, please see Article #57, *Eternal or Eonian?* <http://www.kingdomandglory.com/art/art57.html>

Without doubt, many would quote Jesus as their proof that the promise to believers who exercised their so-called *free will* is *eternal life*. After all, this is what all the mainline translations tell us: "**whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal [aiōnios] life**" (John 3:16). However, the more literal translations use the expression *eonian* or *aionian life* (or, similar expressions, such as *life age-during*), based on the Greek adjective *aiōnios*, which should get its meaning from the companion noun *aion*, which means "age." In other words, *eonian life* refers to life in an age, not in eternity. For example: "**every one who is believing in Him should not be perishing, but may be having life eonian**" [CV]; "**every one believing into him may not perish but obtain aionian Life**" [WED]; "**every one who is believing in him may not perish, but may have life age-during**" [YLT].

Another traditional rendering is found in Mark: **But that he will receive a hundred times as much now in the present age, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms, along with persecutions; and in the age to come, eternal life** (Mark 10:30 NASB). Again, the same literal translations use the expressions *life eonian* [CV], *aionian life* [WED], and *life age-during* [YLT].

Taking it at face value and not reading the concept of eternity (timelessness or endlessness) into Jesus' words, it becomes apparent that He promised His disciples life in the age to come, and He called it *aionian* life, not eternal life. He could have used the Greek *aidios* life, which most closely speaks of an endless life, but He did not use this word here or any other place in Greek scripture. Clearly, Jesus made no mention of life outside of time. He promised His disciples life in the age or eon that was coming. As a point of interest, there are differing views on what age is in view, but this is beyond the scope of this issue. Regardless of one's view, the point is that eonian life is dependent on the ages, for it speaks of life in time and especially in the coming ages, with emphasis on the Kingdom Age, the age when Christ, through His conquerors, rules over our present earth. Eonian life for the conquerors kicks into high gear, so to speak, at the end of our present age.

Consider Luke's companion verse to Mark 10:30. Notice that the CV has chosen to use the expression *life eonian*, which is the same as *eonian life*. Of course, the mainstream rendering is *eternal life*.

Who may not by all means be getting back manyfold in this era, and in the coming eon, life eonian [aiōnios] [aionian Life]. (Luke 18:30 CV [WED])

Again, eonian life is joined with the age or eon to come. Whether one sees this life as a present reality for the believer or yet future, really does not matter. Regardless, it deals with ages and not endlessness, and it is not about immediately going to heaven and entering into eternity upon death. Jesus never made this promise. He states there is reward in the age to come for those who are faithful to Him and who bring forth kingdom fruit in this age, and the reward is to have eonian life.

But, there is a much greater meaning to the expression *eonian* or *aionian* life that could stand alone in the absence of the concepts of *eternal* or *eonian*, and it has to do with relationship. Consider three translations of the same words spoken by our Lord Jesus.

(1) When Jesus had thus spoken, He raised his eyes towards Heaven and said, "Father, the hour has come. Glorify Thy Son that the Son may glorify Thee; (2) even as Thou hast given Him authority over all mankind, so that on all whom Thou hast given Him He may bestow the *Life of the Ages* [*aiōnios*]. (3) And in this consists the *Life of the Ages* [*aiōnios*]-in knowing Thee the only true God and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent. (John 17:1-3 WNT)

(1) Jesus spoke these things; and lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said, "Father, the hour is come; glorify Thy Son, that the Son may glorify thee, (2) as Thou didst give Him authority over all flesh, so that every thing which thou hast given to him, he may give to them, even *aionian* [*aiōnios*] *Life*. (3) And this is the *aionian* [*aiōnios*] *Life*, that they may know thee, the only true God, and him whom thou didst send, Jesus Christ. (John 17:1-3 WED)

(2) "Correspondingly as You give (or: gave) to Him right, privilege and authority pertaining to, and over, all flesh, to the end that everything (or: all folks, male or female) which You have given to Him, to them He will give *eonian life* (life having its origin in, and the characteristics and qualities of the Age [of Messiah]; or age-enduring life; life of and for the ages). (3) "Now THIS is (or: exists being) *eonian life* (living existence of and for the ages; life pertaining to the Age [of Messiah]: namely, that they may progressively come to intimately and experientially know You, the only true and real (genuine God) – and Jesus Christ, Whom You send forth as an Emissary (or: as well as Jesus [as the] Anointed One, who You sent off as a Representative)." (John 17:2-3 MNT)

Carefully consider how Jesus defines this life. He challenges every concept held by the tradition of men. Eonian life is not about an endless life (in eternity); rather, it is all about relationship, knowing God the Father and knowing His Son whom He sent to earth to reveal the Father. This is how Jesus defines eonian life. Nowhere are we told that eonian life is about dying and going to heaven for eternity or even about immortality, for that matter. It is all relational, to **KNOW GOD AND HIS SON**. This knowing is not only for our present age but also (and, especially) for the ages to come. As Mitchell's [MNT] translation states, it is a progressive knowing, a knowing that grows. This is truly the good news of the eonian life.

To repeat, it is a relational life, a life of knowing God and His Son throughout the ages. Will this life progress into eternity, if there is even such a thing? Of course, it will; but, this is not the heart of the life that Jesus has given us. Whether we are in time, the ages, or in some other dimensional state that we have no understanding of today, it matters not. What matters is that we have a life that will progressively come to know GOD!! This is eonian life!

Just think about it. Generally, eternal life is preached as if it is a thing unto itself. Living forever is presented as if it is the good news. But, living forever doing what? Drinking heavenly mint juleps, strolling down the golden streets, dusting furniture in huge heavenly mansions, meeting long ago relatives; is this what it is all about? No! It is about knowing God and being one with Him in heart, to be in love with **God is love**. We have been given a foretaste of this in our present age, but it will get even better in the next age and the ages to follow. It is progressive. It will continually grow. This is eonian life!

One might be wondering if eonian life and immortality are the same. Technically speaking, eonian life is not exactly the same as immortal life. In a sense, they are both relational words. Eonian life relates to knowing God and immortality relates to being separated from death and being brought into full or complete (nothing lacking) conformance with the life of the Son.

Eonian life is life in this age and the ages to come, and immortality is life beyond death, regardless of the age.

It is amazing how easy it is to miss simple truths. Unfortunately, the concept of *eternal* is a tradition of men that will not bend to the truth. But, Jesus clearly gives us the truth about eonian life, not eternal life. It is a life that knows God the Father and His Son.